

NOT A MATTER OF CHOICE

George's death was the sixth I had witnessed, participated in. There are no words to describe what I do. I submit only how my personal journey would bring me to a state of the unconditional, to be present at these closing moments of soul's mortal journey. That my own soul would traverse decades to ultimately connect with another's irreversible moment in time.

My mortal reasoning sees it is a great mystery, to many links in a chain to comprehend. Yet, we become a composite of our life's cumulative experience. We become the sum total of the mystery of choices made and not made. I say mystery, are we responsible for the end result of those choices made; are we subject to circumstances where there is No choice? Is our essence predicated on choices not made?

How can that be? I offer no explanation other than, I did not and could not have chosen, thus, the great mystery of life.



At no point in the birth process do we, as humans, choose our race or gender, nor do we choose the religion, economics or psychology out of which society has placed prejudices, requirements and stereotypes on race and gender. It is humanity itself that chooses to condemn itself by choosing disproportionate amounts of negative attention to these differences rather than the likenesses.

The reality of life brings forth the birth of a human being. The specific human differences are gender and race. Yet, these differences can be reduced to simply gender. From race to race, aside from culture, there are no biological differences.

We are the **Human Race**. Only in gender is the difference biological. But, in that difference there is balance out of which comes the human gender.

What gives meaning and defines the human race is the immeasurable diversity of the individual. Because of humanity's vast diversity and the unwillingness to recognize those diversities for being human, life. We with our human proclivity to judge, see anyone who is different as a threat. Because of this threat, wars have resulted from hate of these differences, prejudice resulting in lynching one who is unconventional. "Think, do, look and act as I do." All conditions of those who say, "Because you are different, you are less than me."

As the globe continues to shrink, humanity is coming face to face with itself, with its own diversities. Without the individual the world would not have known Van Gogh, Picasso, Gandhi or Martin Luther King. There are times when governments dictate controls and conditions on the individual's gifted will, to repress the individual in the name of sameness. Rules and guidelines, saying this is Art and this is not. Again, all in the name of conditional control. Anyone who does not conform to these conditions will be ostracized, imprisoned or put to death. How many Michelangelos, Marlowes, Tschaikowskys and Walt Whitmans has the world lost because of individual differences? Without the light of the unconditional the individual will vanish.

What about sexual orientation? Are all births predisposed with one specific sexual orientation? Are all males and females born with a heterosexual orientation? Is it true that any deviation from this birth given

is a matter of the individual's choice? Do all homosexuals, hermaphrodites, transgenders and transsexuals make a conscious choice to be such? If it was a matter of choice, then they would be judged by the populace as deviant, a perversion of the birth gender. If this is the truth, then the choice would also embrace a life which society claims are against nature and God.



A Case History

I did not choose who would bring me into this world or the date of my birth. I did not choose my physical gender, the color of my skin, hair and eyes, my predisposition or my genetic map. My physical manifestation was determined, not chosen, by my biological parents and their parents. There can be no judgments made of one's own responsibility for these birth givens. After birth, family and society do place judgments and hold the individual responsible for those birth givens.

The developing child and its resulting behavior can be the results of the child's environment and nurturing. Yet, a child cannot be held accountable for being a child or the cultural environment they are raised in. As the child grows, he or she begins to recognize the "right and wrong" of these inherited values and there, the choices begin. These choices are based on the value system into which he or she was born.

The reality of life brings forth the birth of a human being.

When I was a child, I did not know of such things. Life was not a matter of choosing this or that. With innocence, I was just a child.

I do not recall when I first became aware of my own gender. Perhaps when discovering my own genitals, or having a healthy curiosity about my own body, no choices, no judgments. I just was! I was a premature developing sexual being. My memory will not allow me to piece together the chronology of my sexual growth, only certain events and the assorted emotional responses.

There was some early exploration with the neighborhood kids. The sort of thing all kids do, "I'll show you mine, if you show me yours." Innocently discovering the differences between boys and girls, not in an adult sexual way, just that boys and girls pee differently. Boys have this and girls don't. For us, those were questions about how our bodies were made. I don't believe we had ever heard the word "sex." There was no sexual label to what we were doing. We were just being children.

However, I was aware even at a preschool age that what we were doing was being "bad," "nasty." I do not know where this value came from. This was something we did not tell our parents. It was a secret. I do not know if this was instinctive or something I had been taught. Natural curiosity is instinctive in all children. However, that curiosity had a judgment placed on it.

As I grew older, such exploration waned. Discoveries had been made and I moved onto other discoveries of the child's world. There was no preoccupation with this gender exploration. There was no difference to my specific sexual orientation. I just was, part of which was a secret. I believe the first identification of *whom* I was sexually came when I was eight years old.

One summer afternoon, our family had gone for a Sunday drive. We ended up at a public beach and had gone for a stroll on the boardwalk. As it should be, most of the people had bathing suits on. As we walked along, I found myself looking at all the men in bathing suits. Visually I became mesmerized. When we arrived, I did not anticipate or expect this to happen. It was like a light being turned on in order to clearly see what was before me. I could not help myself. I was staring with such intensity. Then came the emotions which I did not understand -- the should and the should not's. What I was sensing in myself was forbidden. Yet I felt excited, not in an overt sexual way, but a visual curiosity at seeing their near-naked bodies. This did not happen when I looked at the women. I was very aware of the one-sidedness of my curiosity. I became aware of my self-awakening. I did not choose. I did not make a conscious decision. I did not weigh the pros and cons of events. I did not come to a conclusion. It just happened. I just was. I internalized it. It was a secret.

If I had looked at, and had the same emotions about, the near naked women, surely one would say that was "normal." "You're coming along just fine, when you get older, you will fully understand your feelings.

I am certain most heterosexuals have had that moment of awakening. This awakening and ensuing curiosity becomes a definition of the "natural" process of one's evolving sexuality. What distorts that process? Children do pick up and learn the values of their parents and peers. "This is wrong, this is right, that's odd,

that's queer." Children learn prejudice and can express these values in an exaggerated way, many times, with brazen hostility, just because someone is just not like them. They are different. This is supposed to make the "accused" less of a human being.

Because of the ongoing importance of peer acceptance, I had to withhold my awakening that Sunday afternoon. I had been taught, but did not understand, the values of my family. So, the event became repressed, not shared with anyone. It was a confirmation that I was different, different in perhaps a "bad" way. What was a natural beginning became distorted. I believe a child could not consciously make such a decision. There was no choice. There was nothing to base a decision on. Do heterosexuals make this type of decision in the process of growing up? I'm sure they do not one day say, "I choose to be heterosexual."

Gender does not preclude sexual orientation.

Gender does not preclude gender.

For me, the seeds of conflict had been planted, the conflict between the signs from the external world and the feelings deep inside. Please don't misunderstand. This conflict was not a preoccupation of an eight-year-old. It was only a vague awareness of being different. I had not acted on or brought into light these feelings. However, what was about to happen next, when I was nine, no child should have to be subjected to. For me, this event brought into clear light this very awareness. That clear light was, however, distorted and warped. It was not light at all but the darkest side of humanity. This nine-year-old was about to experience, in just one hour, an event that would alter his entire life.

I tell the following as it happened, graphic in detail, but not meant to offend, as offensive it is. It is the truth.

Uncle Robert

My Uncle Robert (I was his namesake) was my mother's younger brother and my favorite uncle. He would talk to me, giving me lots of attention. On one of his visits he agreed to babysit me while my mother and father were attending an out-of-town high-school football game my two older brothers were playing in.

I remember being excited, I would have my favorite uncle all to myself. I also remember in detail every moment of that evening. After everyone had left, he sat there talking to me in the living room. I was supposed to be doing my homework, but it was neat, because I relished his attention. As the hour became late, he said I should get ready to go to bed and that he was to sleep in my room in the spare bed. As I started to go to my room, he said, "I have something I want to tell you when you go to bed." I went up the stairs, undressed, and got in bed. He followed soon after, undressed, and got into his bed. I remember being a little excited that this man was spending the night in my room. And, he had something to tell me.

He turned the light off. From his bed he said, "Do you want to get into bed with me?" I was a little confused. Why? I answered, "no." Then he said, "Can I get in bed with you? I have something to show you." I did not answer. He got in bed with me.

How can I express the emotions I had? I was frightened, but I trusted this man, my uncle. He put his arms around my little boy body and pulled me close to him. He was warm, secure, close. It felt good to be held. I was an innocent child who had been so deprived of any kind of affection, so ripe, so ready to be held close. To have another human hold me! I remember the warmth of his body more than anything in those first few moments. I was trembling from the unknown, yet comforted from being held.

"This will be our secret. You must not tell anyone." I did not know what was happening. I knew from my own internal confusion that this was not "right." But, I liked being close.

Still holding me, he rolled on top of me, but not putting his weight on me. He began to kiss my body, it tickled, slowly working down to my penis. He put his mouth over my penis and began to suck it. I did not like this. There were strange physical sensations, like I had to pee. I had not reached puberty. I asked him to please stop because I had to pee and it hurt. He said, "No you don't. It's supposed to feel good. It didn't. He

then rolled over on his back and pulled me on top of him. He then told me to do the same thing to him. I did not want to, but I wanted to please him. I trusted him. I liked him and he was being intimate with me, intimate from a child's point of view, being close. I did what he requested. He made funny sounds, moaning and saying, "That feels good. That's right, don't put your teeth on it. That's right." He pulled me up on top and put my penis in his mouth again. Raising his legs in the air, he slid my back down and inserted my penis into his anus. I must have had an erection in order for him to do this. He grabbed my butt cheeks and moved my body up and down with the same sounds of pleasure. He said he could not do the same to me because I was too small, at which point he started to stick his finger in my anus. It hurt and I asked him to stop. He said, "You see, you are small." Eventually, he had me suck him again. This time "all the way." He said something would come out of his penis and I must swallow it. It did, and I did. There followed some instruction about when I got older and did this with a girl, I must always pull my penis out and not come inside her. He then told me this was our secret. That I must never tell anyone. If I did, they would put him in jail and take me from my family and put me in a reformatory! He then got out of my bed.

That night, which is indelible in my memory, had such mixed signals. The warmth, the attention, the affection, all of which I was starved for. I was so willing. This, mixed with adult sex, which I did not understand. The two, together, were one event. Then I was told in so many words that it was bad.

Oh, poor child! Such mixed feelings! I was the good boy and never told anyone until many years later. In the years to come, as I got older, this event would be repeated, but always on the sly, when he could get me off by myself.

I was never to understand the right or wrong of that night because of the mixed signals. I never hated my uncle. How was I to know that in the long run, by being a "good boy," that night would direct my life as sure as someone wrote a script that I would later act out? In hindsight, the years to follow were totally predictable.

I know there are those parlor psychologists who would say that the event with my uncle was the sole reason for my sexual orientation, that sexuality is a matter of childhood programming. Child abuse does program a child, but it does not program sexual orientation.

For me, that event further complicated what might have been a more natural sexual development. In those dark years a homosexual orientation was considered a perversity, unnatural. At that time, I already had two strikes against me. I was a nine-year-old who, not by choice, was awakening to his own truth, which happened to be against society's, and then, was told in the context of an adult homosexual act that "if you tell anyone, you will be taken from your family and put in a reformatory." If I had been a heterosexual child, do you think I would have told? No! Few children who are victims of incestual pedophilia tell.

At the time, I did not even know the word "abuse." I did not see it as abuse. As a child, the event taught me, or even confirmed, that I was different and maybe even bad. As a child, I could not separate it from my day-to-day life. I could not make it an isolated event, never to be thought of again. It was premature and gave me a very distorted picture of my own progressive sexual growth. I do know that after my introduction to adult sex and all those mixed signals, I began, for the first time, to act out that abuse.

Certain "inappropriate" behavior was introduced into those childhood explorations. I had discovered, via my uncle, oral sex. This was not sex in the adult sense. I was only nine and so were my friends. I had something new to show them, something an adult had taught me. I could put my mouth on their peepee. We put no value judgment on this behavior other than it was a secret.

Somehow that secret was broken, coincidentally at a time when all my peers in school were, themselves, discovering their own awakenings. This was a small school. Elementary and high school in the same building. There were perhaps only 20 in my fourth grade. The secret became rumor and the rumor spread. I was labeled different, even bad. The upper class-men would tease me in the halls. "Hey, Bobby, want some of this?" At times I would be set up for some cruel joke. On one occasion, a classmate asked me to meet him in the boy's room. I did. He wanted to put his penis in my mouth. I refused, if anything I was frightened by his overt

behavior. I later found out that he intended to "piss" in my mouth. When I opened the door to leave the boy's room, the hall outside was filled with my classmates laughing at me, thinking the joke had taken place. I was never able to shed this stigma throughout my entire school years. I was *queer*, a horrible word. Even now when I hear that word, my insides wrench.

School was a living hell. I was being eaten alive with torment. I, in no way, understood myself. Why was I so different? If ever there was a choice, I would not have chosen to be a homosexual because of the never-ending embarrassment, humiliation and internal pain.

By junior high, I had reached and grown through puberty. My glands were starting to run rampant. My mother found evidence that I had been masturbating. First, she confronted me. It was a first-degree interrogation, concluded with "you are disgusting. I'm going to tell your father." I had, indeed, done something very bad. I could hear her irate voice talking to my father. In the next room, I sat there waiting for the worst. The wrath from hell, my father.

He came into my room with such a fierce look on his face. "Your mother has told me what you have been doing. I am going to tell you just once. You had better stop this nastiness. Do you know what they do with people like you? They would tar and feather them and run them out of town. You're sick. It's disgusting!" I was so humiliated. What could I say except what I thought must be the answer. How I was introduced to sex? The pain, the fear of putting into words why I must be such a bad person. With tears in my eyes and so afraid of what I was about to say. "It started with Uncle Robert when I was nine, he would have sex with me. He told me that "It" must be kept a secret, that if I told anyone they would put him in jail and take me away from my family and put me in a reformatory." My parents' collective response was, "You're sick. You're lying. How could you make up such a story?" The subject of my uncle was never mentioned again.

This would constitute the total of my sex education via my parents. The subject of sex had never, nor ever would, be mentioned in that house. Sex was a dirty word. I also accepted the denial of this subject as normal. Sex was a bad necessity of life. Masturbation was evil. Sex out of wedlock was a sin. My parents did not know what was happening to me internally or at the school. There was no way I could share my pain or ask for their help. All through my formative years I was alone with this very personal pain.

By high school I did participate in all the social events of school. I dated, went to dances, was a good dancer. I double dated and made out, necking in the back seat, even felt up a girl, at the same time fantasizing about the boy in the front seat.

I tried so earnestly to blend in, to be like all my classmates. That was a choice. I did choose to go against what, in reality, was my true nature.

In brief, if my sexuality had been a matter of choice, I would have chosen to be heterosexual. If it really was a matter of choice as to which one I could pick, it would have been simple to choose between a life of pain or normality. I had so many questions to answer with no help. At the time, I felt my sexuality was a dead end. I was damned for eternity.

When I was 17, I wrote the following, all questions. The first line of each stanza is a question of the heterosexual. The second line is a question of the homosexual.

*What is it that makes a man?
What is it that does not make a man?*

*Is it inside or
Is it outside?*

*Love for one or
Love for the other?*

*What is it that makes one strong?
What is it that makes the other weak?*

*Is it to abide or
Is it to die?*

*Love for life or
Love for death?*

How could something as fundamental as sexual orientation drive me to feel that a choice between heterosexuality and homosexuality would result in a choice between abiding (conformity) or dying, love for life or love for death? Ominous thoughts that were based on what society had dictated to me. One more time, how could anyone choose between love for life or love for death? To follow the dictates of society or be true to oneself?

Let me put the shoe on the other foot for just a moment. If society dictates that any heterosexual expression was a perversion, could the heterosexual deny what was taken for granted? As a result of your true feelings, you would be labeled queer. Never allowed to express your feelings openly. The institution of marriage is an insult to society. Deny your true self. That which was taken for granted is now a matter of abide or die. Kill that portion of you that has drawn you to the opposite sex. Now I ask you to choose. You can't. You never did in the first place, nor can you now.

As time passed, my emotions began to draw into focus -- anxiety, depression, thoughts of suicide, even at times homophobia, a form of self denial in order to receive acceptance.

When I finally "came out," it was a revelation of the greatest magnitude. I discovered that I was not the only queer in the world. I was not alone with my agony.

This happened when, for the first time, I was out of the toxic confines of my parents. I went away to college. I had chosen to study Fine Arts as a vocation. The school chosen was well known for its fine arts department. I would soon discover that a large portion of the school population was homosexual. There were private parties where boys danced with boys with open affection. I could not believe what my eyes were seeing. I was very shy and backwards, not sure of myself or what I was witnessing. And then it happened. An upperclassman, his room being next to mine, came into my room and climbed into bed with me, in the middle of the night. This was the first time I had ever been in bed with another homosexual. The first time my desires came to fruition, passing physical desires. This was a living, breathing person who felt the same way I did. The next day, all I could do was think of him, wanting to be with him. I had real feelings of desire for him. These feelings would be short lived. I learned that he was just making the rounds. He had bragged that he was going to have all the freshmen boys in our dormitory.

At about the same time this happened, there was a great purge about to take place. The school administration had been working undercover, finding informants to name names in order to clear out all the homosexuals. The dorm managers were all graduate students. The administration had instructed them to "interview, befriend" all the male students in their dorms, coercing them into naming names. The dorm monitor did befriend me. As it turned out, he was doing graduate work in psychology. He encouraged me to talk about whatever problems I might be having with school. These talks became very personal on my part and once he had my confidence and trust, I confessed to him what had happened that night when the upperclassman came into my room. I did not, however, confess my own truth. I do believe that with time, I would have eventually shared that truth, but those intimate talks suddenly stopped. I did not know what all this was leading to. Dear God, I did not know what I was doing. What did I do? That upperclassman was expelled. The school was cleared out. That's right, all the known or named homosexuals were expelled. But not me. If ever a choice was to be made, one more time, this should have been it. I made the wrong choice. By denying myself, I became

homophobic. I denied my friend. I named him in order to deny my true self, for me, all in the name of acceptance. If there is such a thing as karma, I got my just due. At almost the end of my freshman year I too was expelled. What comes around, goes around.

The following year was tumultuous. I suffered with my own personal guilt and grief for what I had done and, the never-ending guilt from my parents, proof that I was no good. "You're no child of mine." My sexuality was finally out to my parents. There followed accusations. "Whose fault is it? I did the best I knew how," my mother would sob. Then in anger, "It's not your father's fault. It's the fault of those people you run around with." She would go on and on. "Why is this happening to me? What will the neighbors think?"

All because of something as fundamentally human as sexual orientation, I was faced with five charges to change.

- Religion -- For the salvation of my soul
(I was an abomination)
- Psychology -- To be mentally "Normal"
(I was antisocial, deviant, homosexual reaction.)
- Society -- To conform
(I was a criminal, not acceptable)
- Family -- To conform to their values
(I was "no damn good")
- Myself -- A stigma I had to repress, conceal
(In order to survive, I would have to be someone I was not).

I would be advised by some very well-meaning heterosexuals that if my sexual orientation was indeed not a matter of choice, then, because it is "unnatural," I should sublimate what was my most basic human instinct. "Turn that energy into something constructive," or "become celibate." Another piece of heterosexual wisdom states that homosexuality is a threat to the "purpose of sex" which is for propagation only. In both cases, I "must" deny myself.

I had managed through my high school years to deal with the oppression and harassment. However, this was small compared to the real world.

I was unresolved, not accepting and constantly fighting my own truth. I was suddenly thrust into a society which I was unprepared to cope with. Not a fair match for one who was immature. I had been emotionally disabled by family and society which would say "I chose to be a homosexual."

If it was a matter of choice, then I also chose a life where I would be named:

*Queer--Fag--Faggot--Fay--Homo--Sissie--Pansy--Twinkly Queen--Deviant--
-Pervert--Sick--Abomination--Sinful Subhuman . . .*

I would be stereotyped as:

*Effeminate, physically weak, "thinks of nothing but sex," child molester,
woman hater, promiscuous, anti-propogationist, a "threat to National
Security," degenerate and unnatural. . .*

I deserved to be:

*Beaten up, ostracized, locked up, put on a desert island, killed, damned to
Hell . . .*

I have personally experienced every name, every stereotype, every accusation and have been discriminated against, threatened and denied.



To ask the human race to be celibate would be absurd. It would not take long for the entire human race to die off. So we have what is called propagation; survival of the human species. There is nothing profound or insightful about this statement. There is nothing, so far, that is threatening to annihilate the human species.

The human breed is not on the endangered list. If anything, it is the opposite. There is, and has been, world concern for over-population, concluding that the human race has to learn to curtail its most basic instinct of propagation. Only in the last few decades has the human race been faced with total annihilation through a world-wide nuclear war. As of this writing, that threat has been all but dissolved.

Of those who do choose to be celibate, it is usually the result of a higher calling. For whatever reason, self-controlled discipline, resulting among the religious in a vow of celibacy. These people represent a very small percentage of the world population. In addition, these people are held in high esteem, almost in a mystical way for their denial or sacrifice of a most human instinct.

Human sexuality and propagation are considered natural, beautiful and mysterious. Even the biology of the sexual act and resulting birth are a wonder.

Human sexuality is inherent. All healthy humans have the biological and emotional drive to express themselves in a sexual way, whether it is for the sole purpose of building a family or as an extension of the love or physical attraction between two people. Sexuality is part of our humanness. Cultures, religions and laws have, for centuries, applied dogma, rules, customs and governances to control the sexual act. And for centuries, as mankind has sought greater enlightenment, those dogmas, customs and laws have changed as many times as the number of centuries they have been in existence.

In no way am I trying to create a position for the right or wrong of individuals in a historic sense, or for the responsibility to the sexual act, or the context in which that act takes place. I am only trying to say that sex itself is a natural portion of what makes us human. In some cultures, sex is a right of passage into adulthood. It is also taken for granted by the heterosexual population.

Two people meet, fall in love, express that love openly whether it is holding hands or kissing in public. This is accepted and is appropriate in most cultures. The further extension of that love expressed as sex is in private. This, too, is accepted as appropriate. That right is not questioned. This expression meets all the requirements of a contemporary society.

However, within the heterosexual population, there is INCEST parent to children; adult to children; children to children sexual abuse. This constitutes the worst perversion of the sexual human. And then, there is a long litany of rape, sexual addiction, prostitution, infidelity. There are the fringe sexual acts, those that society today neither condones nor condemns, sex out of wedlock, promiscuity, sodomy, anonymous sex, sado-masochism, fantasy sex, pornography and telephone sex to name but a few.

Some of these acts are protected by law. There does not seem to be any universal truth through the ages of acceptable human sexual behavior. The hypocrisy of all this is that most of the heterosexual population condemns with loud voices the homosexual as a perversion. Why do people equate homosexuals with nothing but the sexual act? Homosexuals have been charged as being promiscuous. Promiscuity is the number of different partners -- not the number of times you have sex.

A homosexual is in no way different from the heterosexual. The hypocrisy or double standard is: You cannot say that just because a man is heterosexual, he looks for sex 24-hours a day and has sex by picking up prostitutes or molesting little girls. However, a heterosexual male in a relationship is considered a "stud" if he has sex more than once a day, or even out of a relationship. It is something he brags about.

Homosexuals are human beings first. They are responsible for holding important jobs, are well educated, contribute enormously to culture and society, pay taxes, go to church, love God, want love in a monogamous relationship. Sexual orientation does not deny the qualities of the individual to be human.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, more than three decades ago, said that sex can no longer be a question of heterosexual or homosexual. It is a question of just sexuality. We have to look at the larger picture, which is human sexuality. If the sexual act between two *consenting adults* and as long as that act is an extension of the love these two share, then there is no moral issue. However, if the act is in the name of lust, where there is no love, then this is a moral issue. Why? The body is more than an object. Such an act speaks of objects, not of human dignity. How did such wisdom get lost?

All healthy humans are sexual beings. Society and religion have placed, or created, unhealthy values on sexual orientation.

When society fails to acknowledge that authentic love does exist between two people of the same sex, it fails to allow the expression of that love. When society fails to recognize human rights, it fails to recognize that all prejudice and blind judgments will indeed be their own last judgment.



Thus far, I have intentionally focused on sexual orientation. I have done this in order not to cloud the question of my sexuality with all the other toxins that were also a part of my personal developmental years.

As a human develops, from childhood on, all the different aspects of personhood integrate. Part of the definition of maturity is the balance that develops between the integrated portions of the personality. I do feel that with homosexuals, there is a disproportionate amount of anxiety in the awakening of that portion of the personality. By the time I had reached my early teens, I was experiencing anxiety in many levels of my personality.

Of the darkness that was becoming my life, I will for the first time ever bring to words the truth of my personal beginnings. I became a dysfunctional child and young adult, not knowing the authenticity of love.

The reality of my life, of my conception, the consequence of an accident, brought forth my birth on December 13, 1937. I was the third son, my brothers' being seven and nine years of age when this unwanted event took place. Because of the demands of a newborn, I stole my brothers' mother. As an aftermath of this age gap, my brothers saw me as a liability. I was a painful reality for a mother and father who did not want the responsibility of a third child. These were my birth givens, the authenticity of an infant who did not choose.

The first decade of life bore out the products of resentment for the circumstances of my birth. In just two more years, at the tender age of twelve, I had been trained to believe that I was not worthy of life and that I should not be. You might ask, 'How can that be, what about love?' I speak of the very antithesis of that fragile possession.

A young child does know love. In all innocence, a child knows love well enough to give it. Love is the food that nourishes its being. It knows love because it is the very food of the soul. Deny a child love and its being will not become whole. If this child is fortunate to become an adult, there will always be a sense of lacking, having never know fulfillment.

My adult life was spent having no memory of my childhood.

Not until I was 54 years of age, was the truth of my childhood revealed through the writing of three letters.

I wrote one each to my father and mother, and one to both of them. These letters were not mailed, but were written purely as a release of the many long and repressed truths. They were painful to write, to see before me in words, the darkest of beginnings, dealing almost exclusively with the first 12 years of my life. Through this writing I became that child again. There is a mixture in the text of a twelve year old child and a fifty four year old man.

Once I was able to open the door to my childhood, I became flooded with vivid memories. These letters opened that door, behind which were many of the answers I have searched most of my life to find.

There is no way to make palatable the discomfort from reading these letters. I can not apologize. The truth needs no apology.

It is the truth of the way my life began.

April 1992
To My Father,

How must I "Act" in order for you to accept me, love me? I should have asked you that question when I was a child. If I act in a certain way, will you love me? Will you recognize me? Will you verify that I exist? Will you comfort me when I am wrong, help me to grow instead of beating me down . . . down to where I did not know who I was . . . lost, frightened, never knowing love, just your rejection? Your anger?

How many times did you have to tell me, "You're not worth the powder it would take to kill you," or "I'll teach you. You'll wish you hadn't been born."?

The echo of that raging voice still resonates in my head. You were my father. You were all I had, the one, the only. How much I wanted and needed your acceptance, your approval, your love. I was your child but once, innocent but once. I hung onto your every word, believing in you. I trusted you. Yet I was afraid of you, afraid of the sound of your voice.

When you wanted me, you wouldn't call me saying, "Bobby, come here." It was just "Bobby." That meant stop and come. Whenever you said my name, I would tremble. That very word, my name from your lips, said so much. Your voice would be filled with anger, always raised. I never knew what I was in store for. Like an obedient dog, I would come to you, but always staying a safe distance. "What took you so long? I'm only going to call you once." "Yes sir." At this point, I was to be disciplined or punished for, "How many times do I have to tell you?" "I'll teach you." "Get over here. I'm going to beat the tar out of you." Slap . . . your full hand across my face, at times knocking me to the floor. "You're no damned good. Get out of my sight."

Do you know I was 10 before I knew your first name? At school a teacher was collecting certain information. She asked me the names of my parents. I said, "Mother and Daddy." "No, I mean their first names." I did not know.

I addressed you as Daddy or Sir, nothing more. To speak to you or of you by first name would have been disrespectful. It had to be always "yes, Sir," or "no Sir." If ever I answered with just yes or no, "What did you say?" then a slap across the face. Once I knew your first name, I was never to speak it.

I remember once hearing you bragging to one of your friends, "The one thing I demand of my children is respect, they had better not sass me or they'll know what's good for them." It wasn't respect you got. It was cold-blooded fear.

One thing I never understood was when you were beating me, I would cry out, "Please stop, please stop, you're hurting me." You would say, "Shut up, stop crying, stop that yelling. If you stop, I'll stop." Once I said out of confusion, "If you stop hitting me, I'll stop crying." Oh, that made you so mad, "How dare you talk back at me. I'll show you, I'll teach you not to talk back to me." You beat me with greater force.

Do you know I still remember my first beating? I couldn't have been more than five years old. Mother had been doing the laundry and in my way, I thought I was helping. She had washed a little American flag that someone had given me. After the clothes and my flag had dried, she started the ironing. I asked her if I could iron my flag. She said yes, after she had finished with all the clothes. She was also cooking supper at the same time. You had just come home from work and wanted to eat. As mother was putting supper on the table, I decided to iron my flag. I picked up the iron and started to iron when you called. Like the good boy you had trained, I came immediately, leaving the iron face down on the flag. Within minutes, you smelled something burning. We all looked at the ironing board. The hot iron was scorching my flag. Mother got up and righted the iron. You asked me if I was responsible for leaving the iron down and I said I did not know that would happen. "Leave the table. I'll deal with you later." You finished dinner. I didn't. You got up and told me to come with you. We went into your bedroom at which you took off from your pants that big, wide, leather belt. You doubled it over almost ceremonially. You told me to take my pants off. I did. You grabbed my shoulder and proceeded to "beat the tar out of me." I screamed from the pain and fear. The more I screamed, the harder you beat me. Why? That was perhaps the first beating, but certainly not the last. They were never ending.

It seems the older I got, the more brutal you became.

When I was 15, you and mother had just come home from work and it was dark outside. I had been in my room all afternoon listening to music. I did not hear you come in. I had not turned on any of the lights in the house. I also made a grave mistake. There was a brass lamp by the front door which anyone coming into the dark house would turn on. I had taken that lamp to my room in order to polish the brass. I had just not returned the lamp to its proper place. You came storming into my room, "Do you have my lamp?" "Yes sir, it's right there." That's all I said. You went into a rage, you grabbed me by the neck and started to shake me. You knocked me to the floor, picked me up and threw me down the stairs -- a whole flight of steps. You did not stop at that. You came down the steps after me and said, "Get up." As soon as I was able to stand, you started again, literally beating me with your fists. You finally threw me into the corner of the room. There was no escape. I had to stay there and take the abuse. I knew to say nothing. That would only anger you more. I also knew that if I tried to defend myself physically or, God forbid, strike back, you would have killed me. "Get out of my sight." When it was over, that is how you dismissed me.

What could I have done to warrant such punishment? The little glass shelf under the medicine cabinet in the bathroom was never to have anything on it. I left my toothbrush on it. Once I left my hair brush on it. You slapped me for both. I changed the station on the radio and forgot to put it back on your station. If I did not mow the grass when you wanted, I would "get it." Do you remember picking up a wooden lawn chair and breaking it over my head because the grass had not been mowed? I remember feeling guilty and responsible for the broken chair.

I submitted to your power, your ownership. I was never allowed to be equal, only subservient, no opinions, no likes or dislikes, When I was a child, and even more when I was in my teens, I would fantasize that I could share my discoveries with you, share the joy of "look what I did on my own." I know now that I was a threat to you and your power over me.

Since those dark years under your control, I have tried to succeed in life's endeavors, always seeking approval, your approval. At times, I have exceeded my own expectations. But when I got that close, I backed off. "Screw up." Why? I became vulnerable, open to criticism and disapproval, afraid to take that last extra step, knowing it wouldn't be good enough. One more hurt, one more heartbreak. I must live up to your words. "You're not worth anything." Somewhere deep inside I believed you. Now, I am still obeying you, living up to your expectations.

When I was a child, I told mother, "I never want to be like Daddy, I hate him."

Now, my worst fears are coming true. Your ghost haunts me. I can still hear your voice in the shadows of my mind, striking fear in my heart. I hear you in me, in things I say, your way of moving in the way I move. Sometimes when I look in the mirror, I see you in the reflection. Do I love that person? How can I, when it is you? I am becoming like you -- I feel the pain you must have had. The hurt you must have had from your father. The frustration and disappointment from not being fulfilled.

We did forgive each other on your death bed and gave each other peace as you died. But, you did not die because you continue to live in me. I still carry your scars of hurt. The burden of your life is made manifest in me. Now, I do not leave my toothbrush on the shelf.

Dear Mother,

How could you -- your son, your child, your infant, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh -- *How could you* turn away and not love your child as a child should be loved? What did you do to me when I was but an infant. My memory won't allow me to see or hear words. My earliest memories of you are dark and foreboding, a strange kind of attachment, something I was to be for you which I was not. I was for you an object, a tool. To be used to satisfy some unknown need.

You were there and smothered me, not with motherly affection, but with control, ownership. I was yours. I was an emotional extension of your neurotic needs. You raised me to validate those needs. I was to be for you what your husband, my father, should have been. You never allowed me to be a child, your child. It was what I was for you, not what you should have been for me -- a mother, not a lover.

What were you doing to me in that bedroom when I was six, with those old amber colored shades pulled? It was midday. The room had a strong glow to it. There was your bed. You were doing something to me. Something that must be between the two of us, a secret. My mind won't allow me to betray you, or that secret.

I do remember how you many times humiliated me in front of your lady friends. You would parade me naked in front of them in order to show them my penis. It troubled you that I was not circumcised. You would say, "it's not right and what should I do about it?" I cried and wanted to turn my back to them. You took hold of my shoulders and whipped me around full face to those gawking women. You did finally get your wish. When I was 13, you had me circumcised. What a dirty trick -- I went into the hospital to have my tonsils removed. Surprise! When I came around from the anesthesia, my throat didn't hurt, but my penis did. Do you have any idea how much pain I was in? My first thoughts were of pain and you wanting to see it. You pulling the sheet down displaying my adolescent nakedness. You examining me with your eyes. I was so embarrassed. I was a young man whose genitals were being examined by his mother.

What was it with thermometers? You would put me in your bed naked, roll me on my stomach and stick things up my butt. Thermometers and, oh yes, enemas. As a child, whenever I became ill, it would be thermometers and enemas.

Why did you tell me my penis was not a nice thing? That when I had to pee, I must sit, not stand. You instructed me to put my finger on my penis and push it down so that I could not see it. As a result, when I became an adult, I developed what is called a stricture -- I could never urinate standing in a public rest room with anyone else present.

We took showers together up until I was eight years old. At nine, you made me wear only my underwear in public. You forced me to dress this way to go with you to the drug store in order for you to get a Coke.

I do not believe you liked the fact that I was a male child. I must have conformed to your wish, because at an early age, I became effeminate. I wanted your love so much. I wanted to be like you.

As a young child, I learned to nurse your wounds, to console you. When you and Daddy would fight, I always felt sorry for you and would comfort you. I would tell you daddy was mean and that when I grew up, I would never, ever leave you. I would take care of you. When you cried, I cried. It hurt me so much to see you cry. Daddy was the common enemy. However, you did confirm what I said by your silence. Once you did express your feelings. When I said I would never leave you, you said, "Do you promise?" I did not know the meaning of the word. "Mommy, what does 'promise' mean?" Then you told me that when you say you are going to do something and promise, it means you cannot change your mind. I had learned a new word; but more important was the meaning. Whenever you or daddy would give me permission to do something, I would ask "Do you promise?" It was like insurance, a guarantee of your word. Not so, I heard daddy tell you. "Never promise him anything. He'll hold you to it." I would say, "If I tell you the truth, do you promise not to hit me?" "Yes." I would tell. I would get beaten. When he would beat me, I was always looking at you through crying

eyes. I wondered why you never stopped him or defended me. Afterwards, you would not comfort my wounded self, as I always comforted you.

You also had a mean streak. You liked to beat up on me also. Your technique was different. You did use your hands sometimes, but you preferred whatever was at hand, a book, belt, or, oh yes, a board -- not a stick -- a board. I almost forgot, your fingernails. Did you know that to this day I have pinch marks on my body?

You, more than Daddy, I now fear because of your legacy that lives in me. With daddy, back then, I knew what to expect. I would get called, "No damn good," and get the hell beat out of me. But you were more subtle in your control and manipulations. You had one sure way of keeping me close to you. Many times after one of your fights with daddy, you would get "sick" and take to your bed. Sometimes for days at a time. I would feel sorry for you and do what you wanted. Fix food and bring it to you. Clean the house. I would do whatever you wanted. Why? Guilt. I felt it was my fault that you were sick, because I was so bad. But I could make it right by pleasing you. This pattern would repeat itself throughout my childhood years.

Once, when you had been sick in bed for a few days, a neighbor called on the phone and wanted to come for a visit. You jumped out of bed and, with my help, we cleaned the house. We remade your bed, fluffing the pillows up you deciding what bedspread to put on the bed. You put on a nice nightgown, got back into the center of the bed, being careful not to mess up the bedspread and waited for your visitors. In the meantime, you directed me from the bed to make some last minute adjustments. "Put that away. Move that." "Here they come." You could see out your bedroom window the neighbors crossing the front yard. "Go let them in, but make sure they knock first." I let them in, after they knocked, led them to your bedside. Oh the change. You were so weak, barely able to speak.

I would later understand. If I'm sick and always in bed, I'll get attention, caring attention. Somehow you equated love or attention or caring with sickness. One always has to be nice to one who is sick. For you, a means of control.

Years later, you were so angry with me because I did not visit you in the hospital. You had your gall bladder taken out. You never forgave me for not coming to see you. "What kind of son are you? You didn't even visit your poor mother when she was in the hospital. Lord knows, what could have happened. I could have died and you wouldn't have cared." In a perverted way, I believed you loved it when you really got sick. You loved to be sick.

Guilt. You were a master. As a child, I did not understand the significance of that word. I only felt the emotion. I lived with the guilt. You would say, "You don't care about me. If you did, you would (whatever it was you wanted)." I did love you, but I always had to prove my caring by doing something for you. Wash the dishes. Clean the house. Polish your silver. Mow the grass. Weed the garden. Sweep the walk. Clean my room. Make my bed, although I could never make my bed to your satisfaction. If it was not made by your standards, you would mess it up and make me do it again until I got it right.

You were a fanatic about house cleaning. I hated it when you would go on one of your cleaning rampages. They seemed to always happen on Sunday. First, there was your anger. "This house is nasty. It's a pig sty. I wouldn't let a pig live in it. I don't care if the president himself came, I wouldn't let him in." You would go on and on. I would stay out of your way. Then, the cleaning would start. Once I heard you up in the attic. I went to see what you were doing and asked why you were in the attic. "Nobody should have to live like this. This place is filthy." You would clean out closets, clean out and rearrange all the kitchen cabinets, clean the garage and scrub the floor. If I did not immediately start to help, or most important, if I did not help without instructions from you, this would make you so angry.

You would look at me with such hatred. I would say, "What can I do?" You always answered, "If you don't see what has to be done, I'll be damned if I'll ask. I'd rather do it myself, before I have to ask you for help." You always wanted me to feel bad for not being able to read your mind. So my greatest motivation in helping you through one of your cleaning frenzies was guilt. I was bad because I didn't think of the cleaning or what

to do in order to help.

I was never good enough for you. Nothing I did or, God forbid, aspired to was good enough for you. How many times did you tell me "If I were a man, I would want to be a doctor, lawyer or a preacher? Why would anyone want to paint pictures for a living?" You always put me down by comparing me to others. "So and so's son is getting straight A's in school. What's the matter with you? I saw Billy next door washing their car. He's a good boy. Why can't you be like Billy?" Yet, there was a contradiction in your advice to me. You would tell me, "Always blend in, never stand out. Don't call attention to yourself." I do believe you were embarrassed by my interests, my aspirations. If I was in a school play, an art show or playing the piano in a recital, you never, not once, came. I tried so hard to earn your approval by being true to myself. As you know, this never happened.

Mother and Daddy,

Let me tell you the truth about that child you created. The child you gave birth to. Who was this little boy? I'll tell you.

I was shy. I was sick a lot, sweaty palms, no fingernails. By ten, I had diagnosed ulcers, bad teeth and was effeminate. You called me a sissy all the time. "Why don't you act like a normal red-blooded boy." By the age of 12, I began to think of suicide.

After about the third grade, I was terrible in school. With poor grades, I was considered slow by my teachers and school mates. A real loser. I remember you were asked to tutor me in spelling at home. They were "simple" words. Mother, you were my tutor. You would say, "Spell ship." I would try. "S-H--E, --no--, S-H-I-B, -- no -- S-H-I-K, -- no -- S-H-I-T." You yelled. "Did you hear that? Did you hear what he just spelled?" Daddy answered, "Yes! Boy, I'll teach you." POW! A slap across the face. "Boy, don't you ever let me hear that again." I did not know what I had done. I later asked my brother what S-H-I-T spelled. He told me. Couldn't the two of you at least have had a sense of humor?

How I managed to make it through school I do not know, but I did finish and graduated from high school. You must have been proud of me. You came to my graduation. I was so proud, not so much of making it through school, but because I had finally gotten approval from both of you. Sweet success! To feel good about myself because I had a taste of your acceptance. This, however, was only a taste. It would not be long before you would turn on me again, denying me. I would be back to trying to satisfy that thirst.

Many times I actually tried to set the two of you up, to manipulate approval out of you. There had been a newspaper article written about me and my art. A few days later, I had stopped by the post office to pick up our mail. In the mail was a letter to me from a local art club with an invitation to come and speak to the Club. Wow, some people think I'm good enough to speak at a meeting. I was so proud. I wanted to share this with you. So, I resealed the letter and put it and the other mail back in the box, knowing that daddy would pick the mail up later. That evening at dinner, I sat beaming, waiting for you to say something about the letter. I knew you always opened my mail. Nothing was said, so I waited. Not until the next evening at dinner did I have the courage to ask about the letter. "Did I get anything in the mail?" "No." "Not yesterday." "No, why?" I finally got up the strength to tell what I had done and asked if I could have the letter. Mother, you had torn the letter up and thrown it away. That's how it was with you two. I knew well not to ask why; such a question could lead to an explosion.

On another occasion, I was so proud of myself, my art. A couple from California purchased one of my paintings by check for \$275, the most anyone had ever paid. That was a lot of money. I laid the check on my night table, knowing one of you would find it. I waited, and sure enough, I wasn't praised. I was confronted, "Where did you get this." I told you and you did not believe me. You had to call the gallery to confirm that the money was for a painting. As you can see, I could not even manipulate a pat on the back out of you. All I could ever get from the two of you was a confirmation of "You're a bad boy."

The two of you fought with each other constantly, always yelling. Then there would be the long periods of silence, when you would not speak to each other at all. You trained me well. Do you know I always felt the arguments were my fault? Why? Because I was so bad.

Eventually, I was able to find some kind of solace from you. I learned at an early age to retreat into myself, my imagination, somewhere safe.

I have managed to forgive and forget almost all of life with you, except for one thing. You stole Christmas from me forever. I was only eight, and it was Christmas Eve night -- all was ready. The two of you had a tremendous argument in front of the Christmas tree and me. As usual, daddy was yelling and mother, you were crying. I don't know what it was about, but I was hurt at seeing my mother crying. I cried too. Then, daddy, you came over to me and shook your fist in my face saying "It's all your fault, you're good for nothing, it's all your fault." I believed you. All the pain, arguing, I made it happen; Santa Claus was not going to come.

"There is no Santa Claus." "Get out of my sight." I cried all night. To this day, I do not know what I did, and Christmas will never be the same I am reminded every year.

How profound you were, the two of you, my mother and father -- my parents -- my role models. The two people that would have the most indelible effect on your son's life. How could a small child be such a threat to you? A child that you beat and abused until his very will to live was gone.

How I survived the two of you is indeed a mystery to me. If it had been just one of you who had been so abusive, my survival would be more understandable, but the two of you!

Daddy, you taught me through fear, obedience. I was a "good" child. I was submissive and respectful. I could have just as well been the family pet. You taught me with your powerful words that I was less than the family pet. I did not deserve to be alive.

Mother, you, more than daddy, were my psychological role model. You taught me that my male body was "nasty," diminishing my physical being. You taught me that I must live my life for you, not myself. And most important, you taught me the emotion, guilt. Here you are this very moment standing right behind me, watching over my shoulder, passing judgment, laying guilt on whatever I am doing. There is no escaping you.



After I wrote these letters to my parents I was overwhelmed by their significance. The door to my memory opened even wider. I became aware that the contents of my memory had always been there, a vague knowing, but never to be *really* looked at. By the age of 12, I instinctively sensed that **I should not be**. I possessed absolutely no sense of self worth. But the human psyche has a strong instinct for survival. Yet, there was no positive foundation of self worth. I should have begun to feel a sense of well being. Where was the security of **being loved**? By the age of 12, my conscious mind knew none of this. Instead, there was a void, a hole in my developing personhood. My psyche knew this. I was desperately trying to fill the void before the cover to that empty pit was closed. The cover became a compensation for authenticity. The cover would become acting out, inappropriately, the "should be" contents of that void. To put it another way, until the is age, my psyche was an open wound. At the gentle age of 12, a scab or cover was beginning to form, in order to protect the wounded self.

The script had been written -- the die was cast. If you were a playwright, how would you describe this character you have created? If you were the director of this drama, what instructions would you give to this character?

The script writers have done their job well. The casting controllers have selected. The directors have trained and instructed well. The central character has had his role models and can begin to act out his pre-written script.

Let the play begin.

How must I "act" in order for you to accept me, love me? To "act" was all I knew in order to fill the void of acceptance and escape the emptiness. To find a substitute for the emotional need of feeling wanted.

I had learned, as most children do, about adoption - when a mother and father would take a child and raise that child as their own. I gave this a lot of thought. I was so unhappy and troubled in my own life. I was different. We had nothing in common. I must have been adopted. That would explain everything. The "Cinderella Syndrome." The fantasy became mixed with reality. I would fantasize about my real parents. They were kind, perhaps musicians, always encouraging my dreams. I started telling my friends that I was adopted. I was seeking to be special in the eye of my peers. But it took form of pity, not unlike my mother.

My mother found out what I had been saying. I was so embarrassed, she was irate. There was no discussion, only threats and a beating. "Don't you ever say that again" I never did and I was not adopted. I believe this fantasy was the first outward symptom of a troubled child, symptoms which would continue to grow.

When I was about 13, the father of a neighbor unexpectedly died. I was a friend of the son, who was my age. I saw the genuine outpouring of compassion and love from all the neighbors towards my friend and his mother.

Perhaps six months later, after internalizing my own feelings of witnessing the grief from losing a loved one, I knew I wanted the same love. I rationalized that I could get attention, once again, through pity. I shared a secret with my friends. I was going to die. I had a terminal illness. I think I wanted a terminal illness. People would feel sorry for me, love me because I was going to die. I was playing out my role.

How desperate I must have been, being eaten alive with my own authentic pain, the source of which was protected and not identified. The shame I now feel shame for those actions. They were those of a child becoming sick, poisoned by a toxic home.

I didn't want to say, "Please feel sorry for me," as I did not know what I was doing. It was still wrong. I, as an adult, accept the responsibility for the actions of that child, but I was becoming ill, not bad. I, alone, am allowed to feel sorry for this child. I, alone, am allowed to forgive him.

I am amazed that I can now bring to light these two events. They have been held deep in my memory, known, but not knowing. They have haunted me -- perhaps fear of my adult self passing a harsh judgment.

These two events shed some light on my childhood. In truth, I was beginning to act out the role of the victim. If both stories had been true, I would then have been a victim of events over which I had no control.

In both cases there would have been external forces controlling my life. I did not choose my parents, nor was I responsible for their misguidedness. More importantly, I was not responsible for my own real internal turmoil.

Who was this child? Certainly my abuse did not make up my whole being. Children are resilient and as a child the full impact of my formative years was not fully intact. The cumulative effect of life's trials had not begun to weigh me down. I was a child who did not know how to be a victim or understand prejudice. I was a child who was free to be spontaneous and flexible, who could be open and uninhibited. This child loved to dance, sing and draw. Most of all, he was trusting, believing and loving.

My school teachers knew me to be a "day dreamer," who imagined sunny summer days, of riding and exploring on my bicycle. . . when there was no school. I daydreamed of snowy winter days, of sleigh-riding on a good hill, snowing days when there would be no school.

I built forts out of large cardboard boxes, had great battles with swords and capes, pretending to be one of the Three Musketeers. The next day it was cowboys and Indians, then cops and robbers. All the props of this play were scavenged from here and there, but adding the magical ingredient -- imagination. I loved my dog Wimpy, starry nights, catching butterflies and most of all. . . no school.

This child could run fast, faster than all his playmates, could ride a bicycle with no hands. This child would laugh sometimes at the wrong time and I giggled in the movies when there was a love scene. He disliked taking a bath, wearing shoes in the summer and knickers in the winter.

Perhaps out of all that I was, I loved to pretend, most. With that wonderful free mind this child could pretend to be anybody he wanted. I could pretend to be anywhere I wished. The simplest object, like a twig, would become Excaliber. My imagination was endless.

Sunday afternoons, this child did do something a little strange for a youngster. He would get into the front seat, behind the steering wheel of the family car. He would turn the radio on and search the dial for a particular type of music. I would recognize the sound the instant I heard it. He learned after many Sundays, to find the same spot on the radio dial. This music was different from any this child had ever heard before. He liked it, he listened intently. Sometimes I would put my hands on the steering wheel and pretend I could conduct this music with the steering wheel. Such music was not tolerated in the house. Besides, it was more fun to pretend alone.

The first seed had been planted. A seed that would grow and grow and bring such joy to this child who would become a man.

It was not long after this seed was planted that it would germinate and be encouraged to grow. It so happened that just a few houses away lived a Norwegian family, the father of which was a church organist. In 1947 his sister-in-law came from Norway for a visit. This was not just a family visit. She was to tour this country as a concert pianist. She was an internationally acclaimed concert pianist, living just a few houses away for a whole year! Her name was Dogni Nodaca. One more wonderful coincidence, just a half a block away was the parish hall belonging to the church where Mrs. Nodaca's brother-in-law was the organist. In the hall on the stage was a great black concert grand piano. It was magnificent to look at. But oh, the sound. Mrs. Nodaca would practice every day on that piano when she was not on a tour.

How fortunate I was. With special permission, so long as I sat still and made no noise, I could listen to Mrs. Nodaca practice. I was perfect, not a sound, not even a twitch.

She would call me from the street and invite me to come with her and listen to those practice sessions. I would sit, mesmerized, spellbound by the sound. As time went by, this wonderful woman would invite me to come sit by her at that great piano. She began to teach me how to play. The sheer bliss of touching those ivory keys -- just a note, a chord, the harmony, a sound that went to the very core of my joy. I was making the music myself, not pretending at the car steering wheel.

As the weeks went by, I learned a number of little tunes using both hands. But the best of the best, I had learned to play a duet with the Master, Mrs. Nodaca. Four hands making that great instrument sing.

Mrs. Nodaca had an idea. Why don't we have a recital? You can play, then I will play, and to finish

we will play together. We will invite all the neighborhood kids and their parents and your mother and father. I was so excited and ran all the way home to tell my parents.

All were invited and the evening came. I reminded my mother and father many times and wanted assurance that they would be there. The time had come. A small group sat waiting for the music to begin. "Wait. They said they would come." I sat beaming, looking at the door, waiting for them. They did not come. Why? Who knows? I played my music that evening. Not long after, I was told to stop seeing that woman. My school work was more important than being silly, wanting to play the piano. Mrs. Nodaca eventually went back to Norway and the concert grand was taken away. I lost a very special friend; but gained a love of music that would never betray me. It was my most intimate friend. In the following years I continued to practice and play on a little spinet in the school auditorium. My parents never once heard me play. Once after I participated in a school talent show, my mother commented, "I hear you're like Liberace, that's disgusting." However, I kept practicing the piano, before school, during lunch, skipping classes to practice, after school till dark when I had to go home. I was neurotic about playing the piano. Playing was probably therapeutic, an outlet for my internal pain, though I did not know the source. I had control of the 88 keys. Creative control. I was composing music, not putting it down on paper, but committing all to memory. I loved the piano. It was my friend, never disappointing, no disapproval. If I wanted to make it sing a complicated song on my own, I had to develop the skills to accomplish this end, so I practiced and practiced. The sound I heard, was indeed my own sound, I was creating!

I was the youngest of three boys. The two older brothers (by seven years), then in high school, were stars of the football team. My parents never missed a game. By the time I reached the seventh grade, my brothers had graduated, leaving a vacuum on the football team. When the team coach heard that another brother was coming along, he personally sought me out wanting me to "go out for J.V." He wanted to start me young in order to cultivate another star. I was told by Mrs. Nodaca that I must always protect my hands if I ever wanted to make a career of music. However, I followed the coach's pleading because I knew it would please my parents. The very first day of practice I ran to catch the football. With fingers extended straight out, the ball hit them straight on, fracturing all the knuckles on four fingers of the right hand. My fingers were put in splints. My father was so proud of me. "What happened to your son's hand?" "Oh, that's a football injury." He even happily offered to cut my food when eating out.

I did not ever pursue the piano or football again.

Now when I hear piano music, I pretend that it is I playing, and if the truth be known, that is enough. I am a very good listener and it's all right to daydream.

The Three "R's"

There has never been a time that I could spell. When I was in grade school I had no concept of how spelling worked.

This would be the source of much pain and embarrassment. The spelling bees were the greatest source of this humiliation because it was public, in front of my classmates. It's funny how this developed. It would not take long for my classmates to know who could spell and who could not and whoever was picked as the team captain would, of course, want their team to win. So, naturally, they would pick all the known good spellers first. The captains would be on either side of the room picking from all the students who were sitting at their assigned seats. One by one they would pick. I would want to disappear. Oh no, not again. The seats would slowly empty until the two teams with long lines of students faced each other from each side of the room. You guessed it. Who was the last, the very last sitting there all alone, everyone looking? I was the worst. They sure didn't want me on their team. Whoever picked me, did so reluctantly.

Then the "bee" would start. The teacher would pronounce the word. The first person in line on Team One would get the word. I would always try to get to the end of the line of my team. I would be so nervous -- not about the word I would get, I knew I could not spell it. It was like a slow count down to another

embarrassment. The words were given back and forth, student by student. Please let someone miss one before me. I don't want to be the first one to sit down. As the countdown continued, no one missed. My anxiety would rise, thinking of who knows what; "Bobby spell . . ." from the teacher. All the eyes in the room on me, no smiles from my teammates. "Bobby spell . . . address." There would be silence. I could feel my hot ears. My face would flush, sweaty palms and my heart pounding. Staring at the teacher with a blank look. "Spell address." "A" was easy, I knew it started with "A." A-D (silence from the room I must be right) A-D-R-E . . . "Sorry Bobby, please sit down," a chorus of "OH." I would walk back to my seat and sit down. The only one sitting. My seat had not even time to cool off. I don't remember which team won or who was on the team. I do remember I was always the last, and the first.

Reading was not much better. I was slow, but I could read. It would be the same scenario. The students would take turns reading aloud. I think all the slow readers would sit in the back of the class trying to out maneuver the teacher. When she was about to pick someone, I would slump down, hoping she could not see me or drop a pencil so I would have to bend down out of sight in order to pick it up and hopefully not be seen. In retrospect it was a preoccupation with anxiety, the fear of being called upon that was so distracting. I had no idea what we were reading. Just fear of another public embarrassment.

How did I make it through school? I was fortunate to have very kind and understanding teachers. It would take many years after public school, through building self-confidence in other areas before I began to admit this deficit, and, understanding that this did not make me less of a person. Now, I even have a sense of humor about my spelling deficit. It was not until I was in my thirties that I would find out I was severely dyslectic.

Back in public school, judgments were made by my peers, teachers and me. Unsatisfactory would be the grade on the report card, then I would "get it" from my parents. One more way to pull my self-worth down, I genuinely felt that I was a lesser person. I was labeled a dummy.

What was I doing in school? I wanted to choreograph *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* or the *Waltz of the Flowers* from the *Nutcracker*, creating scripts and producing my own puppet shows. I wanted to hear music and paint pictures. Music was indeed my first love. A source of company that helped externalize what was held back, speaking to me with understanding.

I know my teachers knew this and they encouraged my creativity, which was exceptional. I did get "outstanding" on my report card, but in art and music. These grades were of no value to my parents. Not acknowledged, not praised, if anything, ridiculed. "So and so got a B in spelling, why don't you?" They always compared me to someone else's child. "Why can't you be like so and so?" "You're no child of mine."

Alone

To escape the pain, I would retreat to my room
I was different and despised for that difference
I grew as did the differences.

One would think with all the negative attention I was getting, I would be acting in a negative way toward my parents and society. That this environment and interaction would, in a classic way, meet the requirements for negative reinforcement. If I acted in an inappropriate way, I would get beaten. It was out of fear that I did not act out in an outwardly negative way.

It was a reality of power. My parents were clearly larger than I. This empowered them physically over me. I was passive and submissive. In addition, they had emotional power over me. They always answered my actions with, "You will do it my way, or not at all. You will think as me. You will always do what I want you to do, if you don't you will pay dearly."

The attention I received was the product of power and control. My emotional response was fear and

confusion. I did not know what I had done that was so wrong. In retrospect, there was no consistency. There were differently defined rules of conduct. I did know what I was allowed to do, or not to do, but the inconsistency was in their own unstableness. They could find the most inane actions, on my part, to become irate about. As a result, I was always on guard. I was in a constant state of fear, not seeking the attention of my father. To stay clear of him. I wanted NO attention!

My mother also had to live with my father, not that he ever beat her. That never happened. That I knew he would never do. I did hear both of them express their feelings about spousal physical abuse. It was part of my father's values. A man should never strike a woman. However, "spare the rod, spoil the child," was gospel, a holy rite.

What acting out I did was learned from my mother. Her way of striking back at my father was subtle and psychologically effective. She was a good teacher. I would identify with her and her hurt resulting from arguments with my father. I learned how she dealt with her pain. First she became the victim. She would suffer, cry and get sick. This is how it would work. There would be an argument, a verbal battle. Mother would submit and start to cry then say, "See what you have done to me?" There would then be the silence, days where she would not speak to anyone.

In a nonverbal way she was saying, "I won't speak to you. I'll pout. I want you to see how much you hurt me. If you try to talk to me, I'll know my silence is getting to you. I want you to suffer more, plead to me." My father would say, please talk to me, I didn't mean it." "Good, it worked." I saw this happen time and time again, however, I was a child and not knowledgeable of games. I saw it as genuine. I saw the silence as pain, my hurt mother. I felt bad and guilty as did my father.

I internalized this and, in later years, understood the use of this game. Because my misguided needs were becoming very complex, not speaking or pouting was not enough to demonstrate my hurt. "See what you have done to me?"

My mother's script did its job well. Now it was my turn. "I'll show you," I would think. I have never spoken these words, only acted them out. At first, I would use objects, my personal possessions, in order to symbolically express my hurt. I would direct my anger and frustration at an object that was important to me. Something others knew was important to me. I would destroy it and leave the destruction in order for the other person to know: "I'll show you. See how much you have hurt me, I have denied myself something I love. I have broken it, torn it up thoroughly beyond repair, no retreating." All of this was to try to make the other person feel bad, guilty: "See what you made me do?", not, "See what you have done to me" That was my mother's line. My line had action in it. "You made me do it." The extreme of this action would be suicide. "I'll show you. I'll die. Then you will really feel sorry and bad. The ultimate guilt trip. "You made me do it."

Self hatred, self destruction, self denial, self punishment, all of this is the opposite of self-worth.

A self-fulfilling prophecy. "You are not worth the powder it would take to kill you. You'll regret the day you were born." My core believed this. This child believed it.

Because you denied me,
I will deny you me.
If you won't give me what I need,
then I must not be.
You are. . . Therefore, I am not.

If I were to die, would they love me? Desperate thinking for a child of 13. Where is hope? When there is no hope, even for life, then there is a short step to desperation. Without hope, I had nothing. This thinking was not arrested. It would not take long for me to act out those feelings. I was learning to act the role of the victim, soon the ultimate victim.

My parents were very private. They were not social other than what was required of their work away

from home. Rarely did I recall them going out for a social visit with a neighbor or just for entertainment. Life in that house was quite different from all its outward appearances. No one, other than an occasional relative, was ever invited for any kind of interaction. To the outside world, we were a normal, hardworking middle-class family.

Even within the house and the family, my parents were very private. They were not openly affectionate with each other. There was no touching, kissing, or even any verbal expression of affection between them. Anything that was "adult" to them was not shared, other than the arguments which were very open.

Beyond the arguments, everything was a secret. Any choice that involved the whole family was discussed and decided in private, never involving the children in that process. I was never to have any concept of the reality of the mechanical inner workings of a family. What I did understand was work something you did to get money. What happened to that money, the money my father earned, was private. None of my business.

Once a month he would sit at his desk and shuffle through papers. I know now that he was paying the bills. For me to ask "How much money do you make?" or "How much did the new TV cost?" would have been an invasion of his privacy, disrespectful. "These matters are none of your business." I learned not to ask. This was an adult matter. "It's none of your business."

To them, life was work, a job, paying the bills and material possessions, a house, car, TV, clothes and food. I never went without. They did provide. Responsibility to money was their reality. No one can fault them for not providing the material possessions of life. These were their values. However, this system was somehow twisted. "Look at all I have done for you," they would say. Once again, it was a guilt trip. I should have a greater sense of obligation to them. The role of provider was a means of control, by keeping me dependant and by not encouraging independence.

Emotionally I was crippled through total demoralization and control. Yet, I was the emotional provider and caretaker of my mother. No child can do this. At times, the emotional and material dependence would join. Through guilt or emotional blackmail, they could maintain control. Whenever I would try to break away to be independent in thought or deed, this was a threat to them. They were losing control. So, it would be "You can't be responsible for yourself, you can't be trusted." If I, needed money, for whatever, I knew to go to them and ask for it, then would come the blackmail. "If you stay home and don't move out, don't leave me, you can have what you want." My mother would say this in so many words. Other times she would get sick and be in bed. "You can't leave your poor sick mother, look at all I have done for you." We have come full circle. I had to be kept dependant in order for them to maintain control over me. As a result, I could not break away from them either with a clear conscience resulting from my mother's guilt trips, or without some kind of financial dependance.

The older I became, the more I wanted to try my independence. This is natural and should have been encouraged by my parents. When I finally left home in order to be on my own, I ran away. Disappeared. I could not have left any other way without a major altercation. I had become angry and wanted to be out from under their control. My anger was expressed in wanting to get even with them. For the first time, I wanted to hurt them, the only way I knew, was emotionally. I disappeared for four months without any contact. I wanted them to worry. "See what you made me do." Act out the, "I'll show you."

I was only sixty miles away. I did get a job and had my own place to live. Not the best of either, but that really was not important. What was important? I had my freedom for the first time, and found I was totally ill-equipped to handle the responsibility of that freedom.

I could not balance the responsibilities of paying the rent and budgeting money for food, against my desire to be myself with my new-found freedom. To be truthful, I had no positive authentic identity. I did not know who I was. Everything I did had an emotional reaction, fear and depression. I had never heard of setting goals for ones self. Everything had to be instant. Anything I wanted, I wanted immediately. The means I did not understand. If I wanted a new camera, I could charge it. I would worry about paying for it tomorrow. Tomorrow would come, and I couldn't pay.

I was an emotionally crippled child in an adult body trying to live as an adult in an adult world. I was 19, friendless and understood not one word of this entire story. I had no explanation, no understanding, no insight. To me, everything in my life just "happened." It was the way it was. It was the way life worked. I was a bagful of unidentified emotions. I know now that I was passive, naive, fearful, dependent and irresponsible. I tried to hide from those emotions by playing the role of the adult.

I had a taste of independence, even though I was dysfunctional. This new-found freedom was out from under the daily dominance of my parents, but the legacy of those formative years weighed heavy on my whole being.

I was working as the night desk clerk for a small hotel, and had a small apartment across the street. I had no real social life, although I did know a few people from work and had befriended a pharmacist who worked in the same building as my apartment.

After four months, I did call home. I did miss my parents. Mother answered the phone. She immediately started crying. "You don't care about me . . . you don't know how much you've hurt me . . . I could have died and been buried and you wouldn't have known. You wouldn't have come to my funeral. **Did you hear that?** I am very, very bad. My mother could have died and I wouldn't have known about it. "I'm sorry mother."

I had to need them. I had to be dependant. My mother needed my dependance, I was all she had. She had to depend on me. I had to be her caretaker. She might die. . . and then I would feel really bad, guilty because it's my fault that she died because she depended on me.

I believed her. This was what I thought love was -- control, guilt. My young life's drama was about to reach its climax. The central character is about to play out his destiny. The directors are pressing him to act out his script.

After the phone call to my mother, I became severely depressed. I, indeed, must be a bad person. I had great conflict between my new-found independence and the neurotic need to be dependant. All this being fueled by guilt, insecurity, and for the first time, true *emptiness*. There seemed to be nothing inside my being, no hope, no joy. I became numb. My total being was reduced to nothingness. Hamlet put it . . .

*To die, to sleep, no more, and by asleep to say we end.
The heart ache and the thousand natural shocks
that flesh is heir to.*

I had told my pharmacist friend that I could not sleep during the day. He knew I worked at night. I asked him if there was something he could give me that would help me sleep. Even though it was against the law, he did, on several occasions, give me sleeping pills. In truth, I was stockpiling the pills.

What prompted the moment, the day, I do not know. I was in a state of non-thinking. I would welcome sleep, *no more*. I filled the bathtub with warm water and placed a razor blade on the edge of the tub. I took all the sleeping pills and got into the tub with my pants on. I picked up the razor blade with my left hand and, with no feeling, sliced across my wrists. There was not much blood. Then, with successively more resolve, I sliced more and more up my arm making deeper gouges as I went. I felt nothing seeing there was a lot of blood. I put that arm into the warm water and fell into a deep sleep.

I was awakened by an ambulance attendant who was wrapping my arm in bandages. I was told that a neighbor had come into my apartment to pick up something she had left there earlier that day. She found me and called the police, who in turn called for an ambulance. As it turned out, my physical wounds were not life threatening. I was taken away by the police and locked up in jail, "for my own protection." As I was still very groggy from the pills, I slept the rest of the night, even though I was in jail. The next morning I was awakened by a jailer and taken to the office of the Magistrate. He was seated behind his desk. I stood facing him. He said, "There is someone here who wants to see you." At that moment, I turned around, and there stood my parents.

There I was, no shoes, no shirt, the same damp, bloody pants and bandages covering my left arm. I

felt naked, so very vulnerable. I wanted to hide from all those searching eyes. There was no comfort in seeing my parents. If anything, I was frightened by what they might do to me.

I was released into their custody and we returned to their home. My memory does not recall any of the conversation, only my emotions of guilt and shame. I could tell from their reaction this was something I did to them. I know they were embarrassed and felt shamed.

It was just a few days later that my mother began the interrogation. "Why would you do such a thing? How could you? You see, you can't be trusted. What will the neighbors think?" As a result of our mutual shame, this terrible thing I had done must be covered up. There was never any consideration to seek professional help.

In the weeks that followed I had to continue living with the accusations and the questions, "Whose fault was it? How could you?" They never once acknowledged any responsibility for my actions. Once again, I was bad, and I should feel bad for what I did to them.

A second suicide attempt. I was going to doctors, lying in order to obtain prescriptions for sleeping pills. I had again stockpiled a large quantity of barbiturates. Why? My mother was relentless in her inquisition. There was no escaping. Once again, I was reduced to a void.

I had been sitting with her at the kitchen table listening to her endless torment. I got up and said I was going to bed. I retrieved the pills from their hiding place, went into the bathroom and calmly swallowed all of the contents of two bottles of barbiturates. There was no fear. I just wanted to be nothing. I may have, in fact, died. I was having violent convulsions which woke my parents in the next room. They could not bring me around, nor did they call for an ambulance. Instead, they called my oldest brother who lived a few miles away. He was a volunteer with the local rescue squad. I was taken to the hospital in his car and my stomach pumped clean. I was unconscious for more than 24 hours. This time it was out of control. The attempt could not be hidden. The attending physician recommended I be placed immediately in a state mental hospital in order to be protected from myself and hopefully find the cause of being suicidal. Arrangements were made and within a few days my father took me to this hospital, I was admitted.

What if, at the beginning of one's life, it is predetermined by someone else, then I am an illusion, a false self, playing a role.

It is said human action has no value other than the intent which directs it. I once thought that intent came from the true self. Now I am beginning to see that intent is derived from neurotic needs,

vanity, ego, the false self,

all compensations for lacking,

trying to fill a void.

Not knowing what is needed to fill that void.

"Never feeling whole,"

This implies a vague knowing that there is more.

What is feeling whole, complete?

There must be some standard,

some instinctive knowing that something is missing.

In turn, acting out this need,

a predetermined script which always misses the mark,

a compensation,

an equivalent -- not the real need.

If all the actions of my life are directed by intent and that intent is based on vanity, look at me.

Then my entire life has been an illusion.

I am an illusion to myself.

How much of life is spent as "performance," "on camera," "on stage," or "acting out" instead of being? Acting out a script someone else wrote, we justify this acting out as "someone else made me do it." How can you be, when someone else is directing your life?

We know this script so well. At times we will prewrite a scene, that is, set up the cast in order to play out our predetermined role, the victim, for example. The casting directors have done their job so well.

We have rehearsed these scenes so many times that we know them by heart. They become second nature, not first nature. What a sad commentary "by heart." It should be, "by broken heart."

As a child, my condition was pain. I was earnestly seeking that which was not pain, unconditional acceptance, unconditional love.

A Footnote to My Father

You did say once, "We love you," not "I love you." That was the best you could do. But it was too late. Do you remember? I do, every detail. I was 19. Imagine, for 19 years I never heard what was so needed. I was at a point of no return. A door was about to be closed between us. The door of a state mental hospital. I was terrified and I think you were, too. You put your hand on my shoulder and said, "We love you." What I had to do to get your affection. What I was about to go through to try and right your wrong.

February 13, 1959

That door closed with a loud metal clang, echoing through a long hall. The door was locked. The attendant instructed me to follow him down that hall. As we walked, my senses suddenly became hyper with input.

*I heard loud voices,
a blend of all known human emotions
vocalized.
Screaming, as if coming from someone in great agony.
This mixed with hysterical laughter,
Many voices talking
at moments yelling,
wanting to be heard.*

*Then came the smells . . .
The heavy scent of ammonia,
human excrement.*

*My eyes opened wide,
seeing the source of what my ears feared.
Seeing other eyes,
staring, gazing at me.*

*Our eyes met, I looked away,
I did not want to be there*

*My heart pounded
I felt genuine terror.*

The attendant led me to a small examination room almost midway down this hall. He told me I had to submit to a brief physical before I could be released onto the ward. I was instructed to "strip naked." He left the room, leaving the door open. Immediately the doorway filled with those searching eyes. Watching me as I undressed. I stripped to my undershorts, trying to hide, but could not. The attendant returned and said, "I said strip, take off everything." I removed my undershorts. "Get up on the examination table on your stomach." I did as I was told. "I have to take your temperature," at which point, it was taken anally. He then took my blood pressure and pulse. All this was done with the door open. This was dehumanizing. I was given a pair of coveralls to put on. At least at this point my nakedness was covered. I was then told I could go to the large day room which was midway down the hall.

This place, I would later be told, was referred to as the snake pit. It was a closed (or locked) ward, the receiving ward. All new admissions to the hospital came here, the criminally insane, court ordered individuals, alcoholics with DT's, misfits, I was classified as a "volunteer."

Most who entered this ward stayed for thirty days of observation. This observation period was to facilitate the staff in determining if the inmate was "mentally ill" and thus be committed for an indeterminate period of time. If not "mentally ill," they would be released at the end of thirty days.

I knew this hospital well, but only from a safe distance. This mental hospital was the oldest in the country, dating back to the early 1700's. It was also located just one block from the main business district of my hometown. I had literally grown up two blocks away.

I had, over the years, become very prejudiced about this place. I was ignorant and fearful of those dark gray stone buildings. From the city streets that passed this place, I could, sometimes, hear the strange cries that came from those antiquated and foreboding buildings. This place was an "insane asylum."

¹ADMISSION NOTE: On February 13, 1959, this 19-year-old white male was admitted to Eastern State Hospital on temporary papers.

REASON FOR ADMISSION: The patient was brought to ESH by his father on the advice of Dr. Debard of Williamsburg. The reason for admission was "attempted suicide." The papers state that three attempts to commit suicide in last 12 months had been made.

CLINICAL INTERVIEW: The patient seemed very mildly depressed on interview. He seemed concerned that I realized the seriousness of his suicide attempts. After describing them in minute detail, he himself even said, "I wonder why I am trying to make them sound serious." From the history I obtained, I am inclined to believe that the "suicide attempts (barbiturates twice, and a cut on the wrist once) were, in reality, a sympathy getting mechanism and that they occurred only when the patient had gotten himself so involved in debts, that he needed to be bailed out by his family. During the first two interviews with me, the patient did not mention his sexual problem. However, on ward rounds, his third day in the hospital, with some questioning as to if he had any other problems, he did mention that he had a "sexual problem." He does not seem to have adjusted to this very well and it is quite obvious that his parents have not adjusted to it. There seems to be a good bit of conflict between the desires and the expectations of the parents and the boy's own desires.

CLINICAL EVALUATION: Tall, lean muscled, ectomorphic, white male with long dark eye lashes who is pleasant and cooperative, appears to be reasonably well educated. Perception seem be

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In 1991, through the Freedom of Information Act, I was able to obtain a copy of my file from that hospital. This is a verbatim transcription of the records.

to intact. Thinking intact. Feeling intact. Insight probably lacking.

INITIAL IMPRESSION: (1) Sociopathic personality disturbance, sexual deviant, homosexuality; (2) sociopathic personality disturbance, anti-social reaction.

PROGRESS NOTES

February 23, 1959, PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION AND MENTAL STATUS: Probably of greater importance to understanding the suicide attempts is the fact that the patient considers himself to be a homosexual and that the parents are unable to understand or accept this. The parents also seem to be quite demeaning and over supervise the patient. There seems to be considerable ambivalence and anxiety in the patient about his being homosexual. On an intellectual level, he seems to be able to understand and accept it. However, he obviously has many misgivings about it and feels very strongly about his inability to have his parents accept this. The patient is very artistic individual presumably being a rather accomplished painter.

SEXUAL ADJUSTMENT: *Homosexual*: The patient states that he has felt himself to be homosexual ever since he was a very small boy. The patient's father states that he believes that the trouble really became manifest while the patient was in art school. *Family background*: The patient states that his mother is a nervous person.

PART PROCESSES: *Intellectual*: Intelligence probably above normal. Memory good. Concentration good. Ability to abstract good. Information and general knowledge good. Judgment poor. *Thought processes*: Normal tempo of thought. Thoughts are much concerned over homosexuality, over his excessive dependence on his parents and with his suicide attempts. Emotion seems to be appropriate. Actions generally appropriate, although the would be suicide attempts I believe are constituted inappropriate. This was an attempt to evade an anxiety producing situation. The patient seems to have a fair degree of intellectual insight. However, I believe that he really accepts his problems and their possible solutions.

DIAGNOSTIC IMPRESSION: (1) Sociopathic personality disturbance, sexual deviation, homosexual. (2) Sociopathic personality disturbance, anti-social reaction, acquiring excessive debt, etc., etc.,

PSYCHOLOGICAL EXAMINATION

SUMMARY: The psychologicals in this case are consistent with a diagnosis of a sociopathic personality disorder with sexual deviation. Anxiety and other neurotic symptoms are minimal, if present at all, and the patient appears more apathetic than depressed. Despite the character disorder, however, Mr. Singleton has many attractive qualities which might make a therapeutic effort tempting even though the prognosis is guarded. He could not be expected to respond to classical non-directive therapeutic techniques, but some combination of firm direction coupled with depth psychotherapy might be effective.

Mr. Singleton was cooperative on the psychologicals and very pleasant with the examiner. He appears to have accepted hospitalization in a straight forward manner. With only a normal amount of embarrassment over the change in his status, Mr. Singleton discussed his problems freely, directly and rationally. He introduced the subject of homosexuality in a matter-of-fact way, without any leading questions from the examiner. In contrast, the examiner found it much more difficult to uncover concrete evidence for the character disorder symptoms which were suggested by the psychologicals.

The psychologicals in this case fully support the admitting physician's impression of a sociopathic personality disorder with sexual deviation. The examiner is usually reluctant to attach a psychopathic label to sexual deviation, but this patient provides ample evidence of symptomatology only indirectly related to his psychosexual difficulties. He is a dependent, demanding individual who expects his problems to be solved for him, who wants the environment changed in order to satisfy his needs.

Despite the weakness of this patient's character structure, he seems to be a nice person. He is certainly not the kind of psychopath who rides roughshod over people's feelings in order to satisfy his own primitive impulses. He is sensitive to the feelings and needs of others and considerate in his treatment of them so long as he himself is reasonably comfortable. He is a gentle person who is distressed by the appearance of hostility in himself or in others. If there was some way to generate anxiety as a motivation for change and some means of keeping him in therapy despite his efforts to escape, he might work through to a satisfactory adjustment. He has assets which would make the effort worthwhile, even though the prognosis is admittedly guarded.

PROGRESS NOTES:

March 3, 1959: This patient has adjusted well to the hospital routine; and of late, he has become a little restless with staying here at the hospital. His parents have become somewhat demanding of the undersigned's time, and apparently have expressed to the superintendent, their belief that nothing had been done for their son at this hospital. The undersigned, this date, assured the patient that he would make every effort to have him meet both the diagnostic and disposition staffs next week, so that he may be discharged and his case closed. This seems to satisfy the patient and the parents.

March 12, 1959: It was the consensus of the Admission staff of 11 March 1959 that this patient derived maximum benefit from hospitalization and therefore was ready for discharge. He was discharged this date in the care of his parents. This date I once again spent approximately an hour with the parents trying to help them resolve their problems that are secondary to the patient's problem.

The final Staff Diagnosis was, Sociopathic Personality Disturbance, Sexual Deviation. Disposition: Patient is to be discharged to his parents.

You will notice that the second part of the initial diagnosis (sociopathic personality disturbance, anti-social reaction) was dropped. The initial impression of the admitting physician, at least in this second part, must have been wrong.

In 1991, I obtained a copy of this file and now, having 20-20 hindsight, I realize that in many ways the doctors were right in their assessment of me. However, in other ways, they were so wrong. Their diagnosis was the definitive thinking of psychology in the 1950's. In successive years, that thinking and the Science of Psychology, changed radically.

I must say that my hospitalization shook my parents and me to the core. Because of our mutual ignorance of mental illness there seemed to be more fear than understanding. My father did back off with his abuse, however, my mother was hysterical. This was almost exclusively about my sexuality. Somehow she managed to turn all this around and make herself the victim. "Woe is me!" she cried, and this would start her litany. "Why me?" "What have I done to deserve this?" "I did the very best I knew how. Who's fault is it?" Then she would lay blame, which always ended up on my shoulders. I did this to her. She was the victim of an inconsiderate son, in total denial that she or my father had anything to do with my dysfunctional life. "It was my fault."

Once again, the whole family was thrust into shame and guilt. I do understand this. I felt great embarrassment for having been placed in this hospital, which was so close to my home. A part of my personal history I admitted, but only to, very few. There was then, though perhaps less now, a stigma placed on the mentally ill.

My family and I agreed to the hospitalization with the assumption that I would be helped by some kind of treatment. My thinking was not unlike that of entering a medical hospital. When you are very sick, you enter a hospital in order to become well. We, my family and I, were trying to justify my behavior as a medical (or physical) problem, as if I had some kind of tumor on the brain or a form of epilepsy. We thought this would explain my severe bouts of depression, homosexuality and suicide attempts. All were attempts to protect, hide, justify the truth which none of us would admit. Through ignorance, there was complete denial

of that truth. In fact, during my psychological interviews with the psychiatrist, I was very protective of my parents. I found no fault in them. I was the bad or sick person. I was a homosexual, proof enough that I was sick. I do remember sharing a little about my father's abuse, but it was minimalized to only, "He has a bad temper."

I was not, in the slightest, psychologically knowledgeable of my mother's treatment of me. If anything, I was very protective of her. I must have thought that we were a "normal" family and once again, my problems were of my own making. I was, however, trying to accept the responsibility for my own actions.

And so, I was hospitalized in order to be fixed or cured. This would not be the case. I was there only for observation in order to determine if I was mentally ill. There would be no "cure," only a diagnosis. Although this hospitalization did not "cure me" it did open a door of understanding. I had, in a round about way, received quite an education about psychology. I was not nearly as ignorant and prejudiced when I left the hospital as when, just thirty days before entered that hospital. It was a beginning, however, there was no "therapy" per se, just counsel. What is now apparent is that the hard, protective shell I had created around myself for survival with my parents, was not even cracked. However, I was beginning to understand the tool that would one day break open that shell.

May 18, 1995

A note to the reader:

Time has separated me from all the principals of those early years, perhaps, more accurately, from those toxic beginnings. Like the physical body, wounds do heal with time. So too can the psyche and the soul. Now, it is in this healing that I find a great mystery. How did I survive? I do not feel that I can, with assurance, answer that question, except in some mystical way.

I truly believe my life, by the age of 20, could have turned in a very destructive direction. The possibilities were numerous. To numb my very real emotional pain, I could have become an alcohol or drug abuser. This never happened. I could have become completely antisocial, compensating for my pain with anger, in turn acting out against society in what could have been a very criminal way. Prisons are full of individuals who have very similar histories. I should have become psychotic or homeless. I was dysfunctional.

Now however, I readily admit that I am neurotic. I once heard the definition of a neurotic and a psychotic. The neurotic builds castles in the sky. The psychotic lives in them. The psychologist collects the rent. Having a creative soul, I do create castles in the sky. It is this neurosis that has saved me. My neurosis is **passion**. I am, and have been all my life, passionate about my first love, music. Music has brought joy and peace to my soul. Music has always been a safe place to retreat, harming no one. My work, my art, indeed, I am the most passionate/ neurotic about. My work has carried me through life, teaching me about life, about self, giving me a sense of self worth and identity as a person. My art is that innocent child from years ago. He too never left me, although, at times, I forget about him. But, when I am painting, it is the two of us merged into one.

In the two decades that followed that first hospitalization, I came to know this passion and would come to call it, "A blessing I have been burdened with." It is in this blessing that I find the mystery, the healing of the soul.

This mystery goes back to childhood, where the birth of this passion occurred. The mystery, is where did these instincts come from? When I was seven or eight years old, I somehow stumbled across classical music. There was an immediate knowing, as I said, a sound that went to the very core of my joy. It truly spoke to me in a language I seemed to recognize. I did not even know it had a name. It was never there, in the true sense of the word. I was not *exposed* to it, not in school or home. Where did this knowing, recognition come from? To compound this mystery, once I knew this music had a name, I tried to satisfy my thirst for it. I was met with nothing but discouragement. From family and peers, I was ridiculed and teased. As a result, this language, this music, was something I would learn to experience alone, in private, no one to share it with.

After having learned to make this music, via my dear friend the concert pianist, for the first time I discovered creativity. The mystery continued. I had an innate understanding of music composition. I would prefer to compose rather than play someone else's music. There was a strange value put on my own music. I would not tell anyone I had composed this music, it would be too revealing of myself. The music, to my peers, seemed to have more credibility if it was composed by someone else. I did perform the music in school talent shows however, I gave it a fictitious composer's name. I was embarrassed to say I composed it.

Because of my dyslexia, which was not diagnosed, I had a great deal of trouble reading music. I also had what is called a "good ear." That is, my teacher very quickly learned never to play a new piece of music for me before I was to learn to play it. Why? Once I heard the music, I could play it without reading it. I would merely pretend I was reading the music. It was called "playing by ear." This skill became rather remarkable. Once I heard a piece of music, I could easily identify this music, by name, after hearing only two or three notes or chords. Yet, the odd thing to me, was that I could not spell S*H*I*P.

I was finally defeated. My composing and love of playing the piano were taken away. The "football injury" and the constant harassment to "stop this nonsense, your school work is more important," caused me to leave it behind.

The mystery continues. It could not have been more than a year when that creative drive had to find another outlet. Instead of creating for the ear, it became visual. It would seem not only did I have a good ear, I also had a good eye. This "eye" would in later years become an important asset through several avocations. I was fortunate that the public school I attended had a wonderful art teacher, and art was a part of the daily curriculum. Once again, I excelled. This teacher recognized this and more than encouraged my talent. Like practicing the piano, I was drawing and painting all the time. This somehow seemed to meet with a little more acceptance. By the end of my high school years, when one was to start considering what college and/or vocation to pursue, I knew without a doubt I had a creative soul. I would chose to be an artist. This choice was never changed or regretted. In the long run, this choice was my salvation. This choice came from my soul, which wanted to speak through the language of Art.

This voice would not speak with clarity and definition until I matured both as a person and a painter. Not until a balance was reached between my creative soul and my dysfunctional needs, which would at times overwhelm my whole being. It was through the discipline of painting and years of concentrated searching through that expression and honest soul searching that this balance was obtained.

I do not want to overstate this first hospitalization as all-important. I use it only as a time marker, a reference point. It was a close of my childhood years. As profound as it was, thirty days out of my life, there was momentum in other aspects of my life. In this regard, I believe I was no different from any other person at age 20, asking the many questions of a young adult. Who am I? Who is this person? What am I going to do with the rest of my life? This was a search for identity as a person and as a member of society. How will I meet the responsibilities of this society which, in part, requires a job in order to meet the requirements of a roof over one's head, food, etc? Some of these questions I had already answered. I knew I was, wanted to be, an artist or in a broad sense, creative.



[Note - The following text/pages I am not to certain about. There was a attempt on my part to document what I could remember and what I thought were the significant events of my life and work through these years. I would leave it to the wisdom of an editor to determine what, if anything, should be included.]

Few artists at the start of their careers can "make a living" just from the sale of their work. Such was the case with my paintings. So, in order to "make a living," I was able to find jobs that were in some way allied to the arts. I had no real work experience, although I did have almost a full year of Fine Arts training. This, alone, would carry me a long way in the job market. I most honestly say this was not the result of what I learned in art school, but that I could say I had that training.

In my hometown, there was a new art gallery which offered art classes. I was fortunate to become a member of the first teaching staff. Teaching would become another one of those skills that was intuitive in me. In a short time I became a very popular instructor. My classes many times had a waiting list. Teaching, however, was only part time. I needed a full time job. In this small town, gainful, full time employment was hard to find. Over those years that I was living with my parents from high school to when I finally left home for good, I found many odd jobs. From stock clerk in a hardware store to pumping gas to working at a florist.

In 1960, good fortune did come my way, but with a dark twist. I became the art director of a television station. Perhaps of equal importance was that this job was away from my hometown. This enabled a greater sense of independence. I found an apartment and was very happy with this new job. This employment lasted only three months. I know exactly what happened. The Station Manager saw me on the street talking to a known, local, homosexual. I saw him notice us, and he, in fact, drove around the block several times to confirm his suspicions. The very next morning when I arrived for work, I was met at the door by the assistant manager. I was escorted to my office and told "We don't want your kind around here." I was fired, escorted out of the building and told never to come back. This was the second time I was knowingly discriminated against because I was a homosexual. This did not come as a great shock. I was more than accustomed with homophobia. I was disappointed at losing this job, but I was not devastated because of the why. I didn't know any better. It was the way life treated homosexuals. I lied to my parents. I could not tell anyone why I had been fired.

Once again, I needed to find work. In a conversation with a friend, it was suggested that I go to Florida, specifically Miami, "There is lots of work. The winter season is about to start." I moved out of my apartment and took my things back to my parents home. I told them I was going to Miami to find work.

Shortly thereafter I was off to sunny Florida, the land of sunshine and water. I was genuinely excited, the furthest I had ever been from home. Upon arriving in Miami, I found a small hotel, the Santa Maria, 32nd Street and Biscain Boulevard at \$12 a week for a room and small Pullman kitchen. Very quickly I found a job on Miami Beach with Burdines Department Store working in visual merchandising (display). Once again, I had a new trade. My cumulative skills qualified me for the job. The display department director and his assistant quite literally adopted me. I later discovered that they were devoted, long-time lovers. With my new found friends and under their tutelage, I was good at my work. But, misfortune was about to intercede. As part of my qualification for this work, I had to have a physical examination. This examination was postponed several times until I had been working at the store a number of months. I had by this time very much become a part of the store family. The physical did take place and I did not pass. The store doctor said I had a hernia and could not work because part of my job was lifting heavy objects. This was the truth, and my sad departure was for this reason only.

I was young and resilient. I found another job. This time it was at the Fountain Bleu Hotel, again on the beach. What an experience! I worked for an in-house concession which did all the decorating for the special events, private parties, celebrations and clubs within the hotel. Within weeks I was promoted to head designer, exclusively doing all the floral work for the hotel. Through this work I would meet many celebrities. Joan Crawford Steel maintained a penthouse on the top floor of the hotel. Mrs. Crawford had a thing for fresh flowers. All of the arrangements were changed daily. As a result, I did all her floral work and went to that penthouse many times. We talked on a number of occasions. Once I asked for her autograph, and instead received a very kind note and an autographed picture.

Frank Sinatra, being a great boxing fan, hosted the victory party after the Patterson-Johansson fight. I met with Sinatra and facilitated all the decorations for that party. On another occasion the Dodge family (Dodge Motors) sponsored a benefit for Girls Town. Frank Sinatra, Carol Lawrence and Larry Kurt (West Side Story) were the head liners for the benefit. The floral decorations were flamboyant to say the least. The afternoon before the benefit I was working on these arrangements in the ball room while the stars were rehearsing. I was working on a table on the inner circle, closest to the stage, Carol Lawrence was singing,

when out of nowhere a spotlight was on me. As I turned around to face the stage, Carol Laurence, while singing, walked up to me and began to run her fingers through my hair. The name of the song she was singing --- "*There are All Kinds of Men in the World.*" What a rush and how ironic.

I have shared these stories because, at that time, as a young man I was certainly star struck. Growing up, how many movies had I seen with Joan Crawford? All of those high school dances with Sinatra crooning from a phonograph record. And then, *West Side Story*. I had a recording of the music and had seen the film, both of which moved me deeply. Here I was rubbing elbows with the unattainable. Granted, I was just a posy pusher but this talent brought me to the unapproachable.

This work pace would continue until the end of the winter season, June of 1961 when I then returned to my families' home. I was in a better standing with my parents. I had been responsible and had been earning money. This pleased them.

My room was in the finished attic of my parents' home. Over the years I had created a work space in this room where I could paint. I had not painted in almost a year and a half and was eager to start "my work" again. I do recall this work was picking up where all had stopped when I suddenly left art school. I considered this mostly student work, exploring the craft of painting, wherever I was with this craft. I did a lot of painting.

I had just returned from a great adventure in Florida. I was now painting and feeling good about myself. This positive cycle continued.

I knew I had to have a job. Foremost in order to keep peace with my parents, and to purchase art supplies.

My next employment was local and one of which I am very proud. It was with the Jamestown Foundation. I did have a history of working for this Foundation, which began in the summer of 1957. This was the 350th anniversary of the first permanent English settlement in the New World; the establishment of the Jamestown Colony in 1607. This was a major event for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the nation. Locally, The Jamestown Festival Park was built. The President, Queen Elizabeth, Governors and other dignitaries would be honored guests here, with much pomp and ceremony. It was an exciting time and I was intricately involved in all these happenings. I worked in the executive office my duties ranged from general office boy to chauffeur, to part of the support staff of all of the visiting dignitaries.

In 1959, I returned for the summer as a "costumed interpreter," which involved working at the Festival Park. At that time, there were only two units of "Halberdiers" in the world. One was the honor guard for the Pope. The second was at Jamestown. We too served as a honor guard for visiting dignitaries. Daily, for the truest, there was the raising and lowering of the fort flag and with military precision the changing of the guard. Between these events we served as costumed guides, reciting and answering questions to guests about the history of this historic place.

When I returned in 1961, it was as the Director of Exhibits. There were two museums, the Old World and New World Pavilions at the Festival Park. In 1957 most of the exhibit items and artifacts were on loan from around the world. This ranged from the Magna Carta to spectacles belonging to Thomas Jefferson. Part of my responsibilities were to see to it that all of these artifacts on loan were returned, and to update and create replacement exhibits. I worked in conjunction with an exhibit designer in London for a portion of the new exhibits. I created the balance. In the midst of this renovation, I asked the Director of the Park to send me to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., in order to understand first hand the process of developing an exhibition. To my delight, he agreed. The Smithsonian was contacted and this unusual request welcomed. I stayed there several weeks, moving through every department from exhibit design to fabrication, meeting with most of the curators to participating in the installation of exhibits. I returned to Jamestown much better qualified to do my work. While researching and designing the many new exhibitions I was responsible for adding copies of the long forgotten Spanish "*Treaty of Tordesillas*" to the Jamestown Foundation and the Smithsonian Institute. The Director of the Foundation and I were presented a copy of the treaty by the Spanish

Ambassador at the Spanish Embassy in Washington DC.

I also wrote, designed and installed a special exhibition: "Virginia's Gold/Tobacco in the New World." This was to mark the 300th anniversary of the beginning of commerce and trade in the New World. This special exhibition was installed for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Tobacco Institute.

Within a year both pavilions were completely remodeled. These exhibits would stay in place until some time in the late 1980's.

At the same time I was researching and designing exhibitions, I was also doing my own work, painting at night and on weekends in the attic of my parents home. By June of 1962 the work at Jamestown had been completed. I knew from the start that this work was temporary. Coincidentally, that summer, an old friend of mine was back in town for a summer break from graduate school in New York City. His name was Chip. His family owned a historic tavern, Wetherburn's Tavern, in the heart of the historic district of Colonial Williamsburg. For the summer, Chip had opened a small drink and sandwich concession in the garden behind this old tavern which catered to the thousands of tourists that came to Williamsburg each summer.

Chip and I had re-established our platonic friendship and in the process I showed him all the paintings I had completed. Chip was genuinely excited by my progress as a painter. He suggested that we create an outdoor gallery in the garden where his concession was located. This we did, and on July 21, 1962 we opened the first major exhibit of my work. There were 35 pieces, 24 oils² and the rest watercolors. If monetary gain is a measure of success, then the show was a success. Many of the works were sold that summer. I continued to paint and replaced works as they were sold.

At the end of that summer, we closed the concession and gallery and agreed we would do the same thing the next year. Chip and I were both encouraged by the public response. Chip felt my paintings were strong enough to take to New York City and try to find a commercial gallery to handle the work. Full of self-confidence that Fall, car loaded with paintings, I drove to New York and stayed with Chip. I had the name of a gallery just off Washington Square down in the Village. The next day, when I found the gallery, I just walked in off the street and introduced myself as a painter. I asked if they would be willing to look at my work. The meeting was pleasant and they agreed. I was told to bring my paintings at closing that evening and they would have their "critic" view them the next morning. I was to return around 10:00 a.m. the following morning. Once again, Chip and I were excited and celebrated that evening. The following morning, I was prompt with my arrival at the Gallery. As I entered the gallery and walked to the rear of the showroom, I noticed all my paintings were standing up against the walls throughout the gallery. Seated at the back of this showroom was a man having a cup of coffee talking to the woman I met the day before. I was introduced to this man as the person who selected the work for the gallery. Then, there was an awkward silence. I said to this man, "Well, what do you think?" He shook his head "No," I said, "What do you mean?" He just shrugged his shoulders and said, "There's nothing there." I said "What!?" "Just what I said, there's nothing there." "I don't understand." He responded rudely, "Look, I'm not here to critique your work. I said there is nothing there." At this, he excused himself and left.

I was then given some very sound advice by this woman who ran the gallery. "Your work is good, but it is obvious you have not matured as a painter. Your work is too diverse. Here, you have painted a total abstract. Here you have painted a representational landscape. Your work has no identifiable style. When we take on an artist, we have to have some idea what the work will look like on an ongoing basis."

The curious thing about what Chip and I thought was so unusual about my work was that it was so diverse. The opposite of what I was now being told. At the time, I was totally wounded by this rejection. I did understand the words of what I was being told, but perhaps not fully wanting to accept this truth because I had just been knocked down a few notches on my climb up that ladder called an art career. For the record,

the advice I was given was right. It would take a few more years of life and painting before I began to find my on vision. My work would become identifiable.



When the work at Jamestown was completed I was without a job. By "job," I mean "9 to 5" in the traditional sense. My parents were back to their old selves. I was earning money, but it was through the sale of paintings. To them, this was not a job. In Book I, I described an incident where I had sold a painting for \$275 to a couple from California. This was the time frame in which that incident took place. They were distrusting of me or why would anyone buy my paintings. The negatives continued to escalate, "You're no good." "Why can't you be like 'so and so'?" In truth, they did not want their son to be an artist.

In the middle of the night after my parents were asleep, I packed my paint box, a few clothes and left. I did leave a short note, saying I could not handle all the arguing.

While working at Jamestown, there was a co-worker named Jim who was married and had three young sons. Jim's wife's name was Joy. Jim was also an aspiring young artist. We became good friends, because we had so much in common. After the work was completed at Jamestown, Jim and Joy and the kids moved to the rural countryside, onto an old farm named *Clifton*. This was about twenty miles outside of Richmond, Virginia. They had found this large and very old farm house which was built sometime in the 1700's. This property was very remote and one had to travel more than two miles on an old dirt driveway to reach the farm.

When I left my family's home, I did not know where I was going. I just wanted to get away from them. I ended up in Richmond and called Jim and Joy. We had not seen each other since the days at Jamestown. On the phone, I explained to Joy what had happened and she insisted that I come see them. And so I did. With detailed instructions, I found my way to Jim and Joy and this wonderful old farm. They welcomed me with open arms and pleaded with me to stay with them. The old farm house had many rooms. Jim and Joy and the children only lived in a few. There was a large room on the first floor which was not being used and I chose it to be my new home. This was the fall of 1962, a beautiful time of the year in rural Virginia.

I will always remember the time that I stayed with Jim and Joy, as a very happy and maturing period of my life. For the first time, I came to know the true meaning of friendship, an openness and honesty I had not experienced. I was comfortable in telling them about my sexuality. They were not threatened by this at all. I remember Joy jokingly saying "What a waste to the women of the world. You would make some woman a fine catch. What a waste." I felt loved for whom I was, not what I should be.

As I said, we had a lot in common. Jim and I were both aspiring artists. We all loved music. We spent many long winter evenings sitting around the kitchen table talking about everything from Van Gogh to Wagner. There seemed to be a great intensity in many of these conversations. We were young and there was vitality about everything in life. Because of the remoteness of this place, it seemed, the rest of the world did not exist.

How did we exist, that is, what did we do for money? Joy was a nurse and worked part-time in Richmond. Jim worked as a freelance commercial artist. I stayed home and took care of the kids, the house and painted. We were poor, just barely able to make ends meet. This was, however, not important, we were all very happy. We had a roof, that leaked, over our heads, and many times it was peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Each room of this old house had a fireplace. This was our only means of heat. The water pipes froze all the time. We did not have hot water and this big old house was not insulated. We had the bare basics of living, but we had each other, which was all important.

Part of my daily routine was to find firewood for heat. All I had was an ax and a wheelbarrow. Daily, I scoured the woods looking for downed trees. They were easier to cut up. These were the days before chain saws. However, if they had been around, we could not have afforded one. I did not mind. I had a great sense of accomplishment, when I filled the porch daily with fire wood. We would heat water on the kitchen stove in order to take a bath. As Thoreau urged, "simplify, simplify."

I did a lot of painting and writing that winter, most of which has long been lost. One short-written piece did survive. I truly enjoyed getting up very early in the morning, long before the sun would rise. I would add wood to the fire and heat my room until I was comfortable. Many times I put on warm clothes and, alone went for long walks in the woods in order to be there when the sun came up. The following is a description of one of those mornings, dated December 1962:

*As I look to the east,
a thin line of scarlet appears
framed by a fringed darkness
of the waning night.
A scarlet radiant,
a scarlet of hope preparing
the world for the birth of a new day.
The ground is covered with frost
so white and pure,
as if it were a new fallen snow.
The air, clean and crisp
as if it were void of all the impurities
of man.
I watch my breath crystallize
before my face.
I feel a love for nature,
and a sorrow for men who may never
see or feel the splendor of nature,
a sorrow for civilization caught
up in time.
Man has become complex.
He cannot stop to see the great
beauty of simplicities.*

These were the first indelible influences of a lifestyle I would later in life pursue.

I rarely, if ever, left that farm. The outside world, which had caused such personal pain, was not part of life there. I felt safe and secure. I was painting and discovering a portion of my true self, through a very uncomplicated lifestyle.

There was a new gallery in Richmond that did handle my work. This generated a very small income, which I contributed to the household expenses.

The following spring, life in the woods was beginning to renew itself. The sap was starting to rise, as was mine. Yes, I'm human too. "In the spring, a young man's fancy turns to . . ." For the first time in many, many months, I did leave the farm and went into Richmond one evening to a gay bar, looking for a kindred soul.

I was a new face in this place. I was tall, muscular (from chopping wood all winter) and had a full coal-black beard. I must have looked good as I was approached many times. I have never really liked gay bars because I feel very intimidated by the sometimes overt behavior. I, by nature, am a bit timid and reserved in such circumstances. However, going to such a bar was the only way I knew to meet other gay men. I did meet a kindred soul, a man a few years older than me. A good friendship grew from this meeting. We began to see each other on a regular basis. His name was Jim K.

Jim K. had been making plans for some time to leave Richmond and return to his home in Seattle,

Washington. The time for his trip home was nearing and I was a bit sad about losing a good friend. Jim K suggested that I make the trip with him. He was going to drive across the country alone. He said it would not cost me anything and I could help with the driving. He had a log cabin in the woods outside Seattle and said I would be welcome to stay there as long as I liked. Why not! Being an easterner, what a great opportunity to leave the east and see the rest of this great country and, to top it off, I would be traveling with a good friend.

I told Jim and Joy about my plans and they were excited for me and said, "Do it." I was saddened by leaving them and our wonderful life together on that farm, but I was adventurous and was excited about opening new doors.

With my paint box, a camera, a few clothes and \$50.00 in my pocket from the recent sale of a painting, Jim K and I started our trip to Seattle. We drove almost straight through to Scotts Bluff, Nebraska. This was our first stop, as Jim's mother lived there on a small ranch with her father. Jim's mother was very open and accepting of his homosexuality. I found this a contradiction of my own life with my parents. She was very warm and accepting of me. I had never experienced such openness from any parent of a gay person.



Visually, what I was experiencing was profound and would affect my work to this very day. **The Horizon Line.** I had been taking lots of photographs and doing a lot of sketching. I wrote in my sketch book, "You can turn 360 degrees and see nothing. At night the whole world is sky." Other than the ocean in the eastern part of the country, you cannot see the horizon as a straight line. From Kansas on, I was spellbound by this line. A line that was the division between the sky and the wide-open prairie. The line between heaven and earth, uncluttered space, empty space with this hard, crisp line intersecting.

There was something else about this empty space with which I identified. It was the epitome of being alone. Nothing manmade, just me, the sky, that line and the earth below. I identified with the loneliness, as deep inside I was alone with this great vista. I wanted to walk into that simplicity alone.

As a child, on many levels, I was accustomed to this loneliness. Visually, what I was seeing translated to deep emotions. **I saw, what I as a child had felt.** I found in the natural world a human emotion. In the years to come, this emotion would translate into images of desolation, empty space divided by a single horizontal line. This empty space was not unlike an empty stage or a blank canvas on which my life's journey would be played out. The tie between the visual and the emotional self would merge. I used to say that all I had to do was draw a horizontal line across a canvas and I would become inspired to paint a picture using that line as the main compositional element.

We stayed with Jim's mother for about a week and then headed for Seattle. Jim's cabin was located in Kirkland across Lake Washington from Seattle. We stayed together there about two weeks. I admit I was in many ways still immature and had no idea of what a permanent relationship would entail. In fact, I was not wanting a permanent relationship. I was naive and did not expect this to happen. Jim, on the other hand, had expectations which I could not meet. I believe I hurt and disappointed him. We agreed that I would go and find a job and place to live in Seattle. I got a room in the downtown YMCA and was quite content. Within days I started to paint in this 12' x 12' room. There was a tiny window that overlooked Puget Sound. I was able to borrow an easel from the "Y" and worked every day³. In a short time I ran out of money, so I started peddling my paintings in the downtown bars. I was a bit embarrassed to do this, so I would take my paintings during the day to these bars when there were just a few people in them. The bartenders would set the paintings up behind the bar so people could see them. After this, each day I would check with each bar to see if anything had sold. Sometimes yes, most of the time, no. I did make enough money to pay for my room which I believe was \$12 a week. At times, I lived on a bag of peanuts and Coca Cola. When I did sell a painting, I would pay my room rent and eat a large meal in the YMCA cafeteria.

One would think that I must have been unhappy, that is, not being able to eat three meals a day and living in a tiny room. Quite the contrary, I was very happy. I was painting daily and the concern for food and a room to sleep I saw, at the time, as necessities of life I wished I could do without. I was so stimulated by what I was seeing, the mountains, Puget Sound, fishing boats and the climate. I didn't want to take the time to eat or sleep. Oh, to be young again! I was absolutely bursting with enthusiasm for life.

By early summer I had to return to Williamsburg. The summer before, Chip and I had agreed to have another art show of my work. I was able to raise enough money to fly home through a "fire sale" of my artwork. In fact, I left Seattle with people owing me money on the sale of my paintings. Throughout the time I was in Seattle, Jim K and I stayed in touch. When I left, we parted good friends.

Summer of 1963

In the attic garret at my parent's home there were enough stored paintings to start the summer season at Chip's garden concession/art gallery. I started to work immediately as I had many fresh images waiting to be put on canvas. For the first time, I was starting to articulate visually that horizon line of the Midwest. Only now, do I recognize the loneliness of those early paintings.⁴ At the time, they were unusual. The composition was minimal. There was just a horizontal line intersecting somewhere across the upper third of the canvas. Above this line was the sky. From painting to painting this sky would be expressed in several ways, sometimes stormy, other times full of light. The unusual aspect of these paintings was from the horizon line down, the lower two-thirds was nothing the bottom left blank, at times just raw canvas. There was one other element that was added, an old barn, farm house or beach shacks, way off in the distance. These man-made structures would intersect the natural world of the horizon line.

Other works were my impressions of Seattle, specifically the rain and fog over Puget Sound. This climate or atmosphere was combined with stylized, moored fishing boats. Those paintings also had that horizon line, only in that case, the line was low across the canvas. The entire canvas was blue-gray mist with the suggestion of the fishing boats, but with great emphasis on the vertical masts of these boats.

I was also combining those images with images of the east coast. Tidal marshes, the Chesapeake Bay and trees would replace the vertical masts of the fishing boats. However, the one predominant element of all the paintings completed that summer was the horizon line.

Once again, the paintings were selling. They generated a substantial income, a lot more than what I received in Seattle.

Chip and I had come up with an idea for expanding the hours of the Garden Gallery. We installed spot lights in the trees of the garden. With this addition, we could show the paintings at night. As a result, more tourists could see my work and the paintings looked really good being lit by those lights.

Something else happened as a result of being open at night. The Garden Gallery became a favorite hangout for our mutual friends. I remember those evenings well. There were several other artists, students from William and Mary and locals. This "group" would gather nightly. Always lots of intense conversations covering every topic under the moon. Other times, these gatherings would develop into spontaneous parties. The motto of the young in the 60's and 70's was "sex, drugs, Rock and Roll." This group's motto might have been. "Talk of sex, beer and Goustopf Mahler."

After the gallery closed, around 10:00 p.m., the group would migrate to a restaurant in the business district. This restaurant became the second favorite hang-out. We would stay there until they closed and then gravitate to someone's home. Many times, as a group we would party all night. A lot of beer was consumed that summer. Many times, I would make my way home just before the sun would come up. It was a wonderful time, even though we might have been, by some standard, irresponsible. As for us, we had discovered minds

⁴Plates - 9,10.

which needed to express themselves and yes, to have a good time.

Even with all this drinking and partying, I was producing a lot of paintings. Maybe at times, burning the candle at both ends. What about the "Talk of sex." My sexuality was a secret closely guarded by me. Heterosexual peer acceptance was very important to me. This was the one portion of my personal life I could not share with the "group." For me, this did cause some anxiety, but the vitality and enjoyment of this group of friends overshadowed this anxiety.

I was dating a beautiful woman named Maggie. She was a charter member of the "group." We were very close and on a personal level enjoyed the same likes and dislikes of life. Maggie was a local person doing graduate work in psychology at William and Mary. Maggie and I were a striking, good-looking couple. She had beautiful long, red hair. I often thought she would make an incredible model. Whenever we were together, people would turn around and look at us. We knew this. This relationship with Maggie was as close as I could be with a member of the opposite sex. For me it was platonic. There never was any physical expression of my love for Maggie. I do think I loved her, as best I could, in a limited way. We spent that whole summer together. We shared so much of our lives with each other; however, Maggie did not know all there was to know about me. I could not, would not, tell her about my sexuality. I was afraid of losing her companionship. She might have thought I was acting out a lie with her by being someone I was not. Maybe I was.

By summer's end I was beginning to sense that Maggie wanted more than a platonic relationship, and rightfully so. If I had been heterosexual, I honestly believe Maggie and I would have married.

One night at this summer's end. Maggie and I had a painful argument. The day following, I wrote down that conversation.

Maggie: Why did you tell Bill you went to bed with me?

Robert: I didn't tell him that. What do you mean? Why would I say a thing like that?

Maggie: Oh Robert, you know you did.

Robert: I don't know what you are talking about. Why would I say that?

Maggie: I don't know, but he has probably told everyone we know.

Robert: Mag, we've been through this before, I don't know where you get the idea I go around telling wild stories about the two of us.

Maggie: Do you remember the night you gave me your ring? Did that mean anything to you?

Robert: Of course it did.

Maggie: Then why are you putting me through hell. I'm not just one of the gang. I love you.

Robert: No, you don't. How could you love me? I didn't ask for anything. We've been very good friends. Oh, I didn't mean that.

Maggie: Robert, I love you.

Robert: I can't love you because I'm incapable of love. Mag, there are so many things involved. You don't know what you are getting into. It wouldn't work out. My life is so different from what you think.

Maggie: You have no choice. You can't stop me from loving you. All I want are the crumbs. You can do anything you want, just let me have the crumbs. You can't stop me from loving you.

Robert: You don't know what you are saying. What the hell can I offer you? Do you think I could ever look you straight in the face if I were ever unfaithful to you?

Maggie: You can do whatever you want with your life, all I want are the crumbs.

Robert: It's all wrong, it's sick.

The Bill that Maggie referred to was one of the "group" we ran around with. My sexuality was not at all in the open. In a conversation with Bill, he said to me, "It's very obvious you and Maggie are getting close, are you "doing It?" Are you "popping it to her?" I said, "No, besides it's none of your business."

I could have left it at just "No." However, I am ashamed to admit that I had enough of a male ego to add a tease, "It's none of your business." An inference that maybe I was doing it with Maggie. Now, I feel closer to the truth of that inference which was a disguise, a front, that Robert was a "normal, red-blooded heterosexual", always looking for "It." In short, I sought acceptance, always denying in order to be accepted. I lived this lie for so many years.

In reading that dialogue between Maggie and me, I am surprised at the statement, "I can't love you because I'm incapable of love." Now, I see that my Freudian slip was showing. First, the obvious and simple fact I was homosexual, it would be a contradiction in terms to love a woman. But, "I'm incapable of love." I did not know love. I loved my mother in a strange mother son relationship. I did not love my father, I wanted nothing to do with him.

There is something else at this moment I am having trouble putting my finger on. I will try. Homosexuality, up to this point in my life, had been the act of sex. Not to say that I did not have feelings, I did. However, I think I can speak for many homosexuals of that time. Marriage was an institution that belonged exclusively to heterosexuals. These couples could openly express their feelings for each other with no judgments made. It was normal. Being homosexual, to use the contemporary vernacular, was to be in the "closet." If there were feelings, we had to learn to repress them when in public. If two men lived together, did not date women, and/or if one or both were a little effeminate, they were living dangerously, open to harassment, judgment, discrimination, etc. In order to maintain discretion, not to be singled out, attachments were an excluded part of the "lifestyle."

When I said to Maggie, "I'm not capable of love," I must have believed it. Because, homosexuals don't love. I was projecting my own prejudice about myself. How could I, God forbid, love another man? That's queer. Homosexuality meant having sex with another man. That's all. I feel homosexuals fall into the trap of their own stereotype. There were exceptions, I did meet, in Miami, homosexual couples who were devoted and had been monogamous for years. I found this an enigma and at the same time, was envious. In the years to come, I believe part of my anxiety stemmed from simply being human, as are all homosexuals. I would have loved if it had been allowed. Those men I did meet and had feelings for, there seemed to be an unspoken understanding that feelings would be as far as the friendship would go. Anything beyond that was forbidden love. It is hard, now, for me to even imagine how sociological prejudice could cause a human being to deny love.

At the end of that summer the Garden Gallery was closed. Chip and I, once more, agreed to do the same thing the next summer. The "group" had disbanded, each member returning to the realities of their life. Maggie and I remained friends. The argument did not resolve anything, but as a result, we had put a little distance between our selves.

I was painted-out and the relationship with my parents was at an all time low. After all the activity of the summer, I found myself in a vacuum. I began to sink into a profound sadness. Many of the old feelings returned. Hopelessness. I described myself and my little garret room at the time in the following. It is written in the third person and dated September 1963.

A single, overhead work light is directed on a large easel which is in the center of the room. A lone figure stands motionless in front of the easel. He slowly raises his hand and begins painting

on a small canvas sitting on the easel. He moves his head from side to side. Steps back and then forward and proceeds to work again.

This room is small and is located in the attic of a building. The ceiling is sharply pitched. On one wall of the room are hundreds of books and phonograph records. Just in front of the records is a cabinet containing a record player -- Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is playing at almost full volume. On the other side of the room are several comfortable chairs.

The rest of the walls of this room are lined with paintings, photographs and an old violin. There are a number of plaster sculptures sitting around the room. The whole room is alive with art and objects that could tell a lot about the man who is painting.

This man walks to the other side of the room, not taking his eyes off the canvas, sits down in one of the chairs opposite the easel and lights a cigarette and for some moment stares at the canvas. Turning away from the canvas, he puts his face in his hands and slumps in the chair remaining motionless. Suddenly, he gets up and goes back to the painting, this time, with determination in his eyes. He raises the brush to the canvas and his hand begins to tremble. He doesn't touch the canvas with the brush, instead, he drops his hands to his side, squeezing the brush tightly in his hand. Again, he returns to the chair, still not taking his eyes off the canvas. He stares for a few moments, still with the brush in his hand. He begins to tremble all over. Then, in almost a whisper and out of pure desperation he says, "Why?"

Again, he gets up and returns to the easel, this time frantically trying to work on the picture. He suddenly stops, holding the brush in his hand, this time squeezing it so hard it breaks, then throws it to the floor.

He turns and looks up at the single light overhead. He stares motionless, then slowly returns to his chair, this time dropping his hands to his side. He stares at the light, but it is as if it were blank space. As he stares, tears begin to come to his eyes, his expression blank as if numb from some unknown agony. He slowly turns his head looking at each of the paintings on the walls. Eyes are blurred by the tears of exhaustion. His eyes soon become fixed on a small crucifix hanging among the paintings.

The phonograph record has ended and the sound of clicking over and over again is heard. He is oblivious to the sound. The figure does not move, he appears to have lost contact with his surroundings . . . just sitting, eyes fixed and tears dripping from his cheeks.

This room, which radiates with a love of life, all that is good, many of life's great gifts, music, art and literature, it should be beaming with sunlight. Those chairs are where people with the same love have sat and discussed for hours, music, art and philosophy. But now, this room seems almost sad, so quiet, no music, the chairs are empty, and the blinds closed to shut out the light and the outside world.

What possessed me to write the above, I do not know. It sounds a bit melodramatic. However, I do remember clearly that day. I now know what was happening. I had lost my equilibrium, that balance between my creative soul and my personal life. I was becoming possessed by depression, debilitated by the mind, blocking the creative soul. The creative self had always sustained me. As long as I was working, I was happy, totally stimulated by my visual world. But when that balance was ruptured due, in part, to that deep-seated unidentifiable need of acceptance as a total human being, those old issues of sexuality, pleasing my parents, getting a job, being responsible and yes, getting married were all starting to overwhelm me. I had a lot of anxiety about this last issue. Society, family and peers expected men in their 20's to fall in love with a member of the opposite sex, get married and have children. I knew that if Maggie and I were to marry, it would be a lie. This could be one more way I could meet with approval. Deny my own truth in order to be accepted.

If I did not have such dysfunctional roll models as parents, that is, they were the models of what I thought

married life would be like, I might have made the grave mistake and married. I was homosexual. Marriage would be a lie. Married couples are stressed and unhappy (my parents). I would have to "stop this nonsense of wanting to be an artist," which, according to them was being totally irresponsible.

So, in the Fall of 1963 with no understanding, just the emotions, of what I have just been describing, I asked for help. In this small southern town, there was a mental health clinic. My stay at the hospital in 1959 had opened a door that I was about to open even wider. I felt I needed help, I told no one as I sought help from this clinic. I was assigned a doctor who coincidentally was on the staff of the state hospital. After we had a few meetings, he put me on antidepressants which did not help.

November 18, 1963 -- ADMISSION NOTE: On November 18, 1963, this 24-year old white male was admitted to Eastern State Hospital as an Emergency.

REASON FOR ADMISSION: I had been following the patient in the Tidewater Guidance Clinic, and as he was depressed, started him on Tofranil 25 milligrams b.i.d. and Elavil 50 to 75 milligrams h.s. In spite of the medications the patient continued to get more and more depressed. The constant friction which he has had with his family got worse, and on Friday night his father and mother were giving it to him left and right. He [sic]⁵ father said, "you are not capable of taking care of yourself, and you can't accept responsibility.", and the patient stated, "They would probably both be better off without me, implying they would be better off if I had died that time I tried to take my life." The patient continued to be very upset over the week-end, and today (Monday) he called the Clinic, stating that he felt he needed to talk with me right away. As I am only scheduled in the Clinic on Thursdays, I was called, and after talking with the Chief of the Clinic, called the patient trying to stall him off until an appointment tomorrow, however, he stated that he needed to come to see me tonight. Several times during the interview, the patient said "I don't know what to do. I am not interested in anything. I don't want to listen to music or even to paint -- I don't know where I am, don't know what I am doing, and I don't care. - If I kill myself, it would probably kill my mother too." Another time he said, "I don't know who I am, and I don't know what I'm doing, and could care less." When I suggested that it would probably be a good idea to come into the hospital, he said, "If I came into the hospital the only benefit I can see is it would protect me from myself. - Right now, I am alright, but I feel on the brink and the moment may come when I do something stupid. - As long as I am a little groggy from the medicine it is alright. I don't have to think."

CLINICAL EVALUATION: Patient is a well developed, well nourished white male, alert, cooperative and well oriented in all spheres. Though speech was not { } and there was no tearing, patient seemed to be depressed and suicidal. Patient gave some insight into his problem of homosexuality, and having read on the subject of it's (sic) association with paranoid schizophrenia, and hence I feel he is afraid he is psychotic.

INITIAL IMPRESSION: Psychoneurotic Depressive Reaction, chronic severe depression, feeling of depersonalization, feelings of unreality, some ideations associated with Sociopathic Personality Disorder, Sexual deviation, homosexuality.

J. Gray McAllister, III

November 26, 1963 -- PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION AND MENTAL STATUS: This patient was readmitted to Eastern State Hospital on November 18, 1963.

PRESENT ILLNESS: This is a 24 year old, single, white male who was readmitted to this

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The term "sic" is used in transcription when a word or group of words are transcribed exactly as *erroneously* written. "Sic" points out the transcriber realizes the mistake, but the text is to remain as is, because it is a verbatim transcription.

hospital, having been here previously in 1959 with a diagnosis of Sociopathic Personality Disturbance, Sexual Deviation. He was admitted on November 18, 1963 as an Emergency since, in the opinion of the doctor, he was an emergency at that time. It was stated that he was in constant friction with his family, particularly with his parents, and that he will not face or accept responsibility. The patient thereby implied that they would be better off without him and that he intended to take his life. The patient has been attending the Tidewater Clinic. In the past couple of weeks there has been a recurrence of activities that have been previously known in this district from this patient in past years.

PAST HISTORY: His past history is unchanged.

PART PROCESSES: Gross Identification: This is a well-built, well nourished, white male. He is very cooperative and oriented in all spheres.

PERCEPTION: Patient is oriented in all spheres. There is no evidence of suicide. Since coming to the hospital, he has not even talked about it. In fact, he denied it.

INTELLECTION: Actually, there is no impairment. His memory is good. His capacity for abstract thinking and concentration is good. His common sense is defective in that he is an artist and has a different perspective on things.

The precipitating cause appears to have occurred some six to eight months ago when this patient was almost against his own wishes, persuaded to send his paintings for exhibition in New York. He received very severe criticisms and since this time states that he has been upset and worried, has had no interest in no such work, particularly painting.

THOUGHT PROCESSES: He is inclined to block, rationalize, and be incoherent. . . he seems to get off into artistry whatever the subject concerned is.

THOUGHT CONTENT: No evidence of fantasy, dreams, or suicide. he is quite friendly but appears to be introverted, worried, somewhat depressed in his impressions, having no interest whatsoever in his main interest in life, and that of painting. He has no ambition to participate in anything and doesn't even want to go on an open ward. He has no real interest at this time and requested that he not see any visitors. He changed his mind and wished to see his mother, which we allowed. In attempting to get him to do some painting this time, it met with only minimal success.

The patient is a highly dependent person and has been so all his life. There is very strong evidence of his being head of a type of antisocial beatnik type of group. There have been all sorts of accepted immoral procedures going on between various wives and husbands, and this patient himself is a well-known homosexual.

DIAGNOSTIC IMPRESSIONS: (1) Psychoneurotic Reaction, Depressive Reaction. (2) Sociopathic Personality, Sexual Deviation.

STRESS: Disappointment in work and domestic difficulties.

PREDISPOSITION: Quite inadequate personality.

DISPOSITION: Continue hospitalization, refer to Intensive Treatment, keep in hospital for a minimum period of three to six months.

F.G. Walls, M.D.

In order for you the reader to have a broader scope of my thinking during this hospitalization, I will add comments and/or writings, that survived while I was undergoing psychotherapy.

After a number of interviews with, Dr. Walls, my new Doctor, he told me in a very straightforward way what my options were. I could leave the hospital, as my initial period of observation was about to end. If I left the hospital, my case would be closed. My second option was to voluntarily allow myself to be committed into the hospital for an indefinite period of time. If I chose to commit myself, I would loose all my legal rights as a citizen. Also, if I chose to stay, he, the doctor would become my psychotherapist and we would immediately start therapy. He explained that the therapy could be both intensive and painful for me.

He was optimistic, if I worked hard with him, he felt I would benefit greatly. He also said that as a result my life would change for the better.

I gave this a lot of thought. I can only remember one of what must have been many questions. I asked Dr. Walls if as a result of my therapy, I would be changed for the rest of my life. "What if the source of my creativity is somehow rooted in my dysfunctional problems, and if these problems are taken away, *cured*, would I ever want to paint again." His answer was short. "What you ask may be true." I paused for a long time. Would I be willing to risk losing the "passion of my life," my work, in exchange for "stable mental health," to give up my creative soul in order to be "normal? . ----- "Yes, I would stay in the hospital."

December 11, 1963 - TEMPORARY VISIT NOTE:

This patient is likely to remain in the hospital for some considerable period of time. During his present hospitalization, considerable improvement has been noted, and it is felt that further progress will be attained. It is recommended that this patient be given a seven-day visit at Christmas. Relatives of the patient, as well as the patient, have made a request for this visit.

Francis G. Walls, M.D.

I wrote the following after being in the hospital a number of weeks. It was a lonely night and I had gone into the lavatory in order to use the only light that was available.

December 9, 1963

Dear Lord, give me the strength to paint and write. There are so many things in this world I want to express, to feel, to see. Life is so wonderful, so beautiful. If only I had the strength to do these things. Moments I feel as if I am going to burst with enthusiasm for life. Life is so overwhelming, I feel like crying with joy. I am life, a part of life, life is infinite, but I am not. One life span is all one can endure.

The following is a letter I wrote to a friend. I include this letter here because, at that time it offered an explanation of what I thought brought me to the hospital and the expectations I held.

December 30, 1963

Dear Virg,

As in the past, it's been a long time and a lot has happened. I guess no one can keep up with me, not even myself sometimes.

I don't know where to start maybe now or when I sent you the last postcard. I think to make a long story short I will give you a brief run down. I made it to the West Coast and stayed in Seattle for about four months and then flew back to Williamsburg. I had a great time in Seattle, did a lot of painting and also sold everything I painted, enough to pay for a plane ticket home and to live on the whole time I was in Seattle. When I got back to Williamsburg I was booked for a show to run all summer.

The show was great and I did a hell of a lot of painting. In the two months the show ran, I painted 49 oils and sold 38 and hit an all time high in the price of one painting, \$275. Isn't that great? I just could not believe that someone would pay that much for my work. I hope this is the beginning of the road up. It's about time, right?

Now for the bad news. When the show closed, I went down hill. Virg, I wish I could talk to you in person so I could explain a little better. As you know, I am not much of a writer. I had been drinking quite a bit during the summer and lost the true meaning of what I was doing. Or maybe I should say, nothing had any

meaning, I had painted myself out. I tried and tried, but nothing would come out. Then I became depressed and started thinking in an unhealthy way. Well, as you know I have never been too stable. Well, this time I panicked, and was afraid I might do something to myself. I could see what was happening and in turn went to see a doctor and he, in turn, panicked and put me in the State Hospital. Well, here I am in a mental hospital. I have been here for almost a month. I have a very good doctor and I have a great deal of confidence in him. He has set up a positive plan which should have positive results. I was told first that it would take some time -- three to six months. A complete case history, complete psychological tests and numerous other means to get an overall picture of my personality and perhaps pinpoint the cause of my unstableness. I have great hopes that some good will come of this.

One good thing has happened in the past few weeks, I have started painting again and feel good about the results.

Virg, you should know by now that I will be alright. I can get myself into messes overnight and somehow I make it alright. However, I hope this time will be the last.

Hope you had a happy Holiday. If you have time, please write, I would love to hear from you.

As ever,
Bob

PAGE 4 MISSING -- HOSPITAL TRANSCRIPT CONTINUES AS FOLLOWS:

January 10, 1964 - continued -

[Complete verbal exposure. He appears to have no shame, and glorifies in this public acclamation of his weaknesses, his qualities or lack of qualities which he exhibits. Having met the patient's parents, I do not feel anything is to be gained by trying to get these two in therapy, because the mother is only polite when in the hospital and completely fails to recognize the undersigned if he meets her in public and the father is a very strongly aggressive type without any real understanding of mental sickness.

FULL CONCLUSION: Since the object in therapy is to strengthen this boy's ego boundaries, that he might have some understanding in order to be accepted as a homosexual in a less definant (sic) way in society. It is not the object of the therapist to change the person's homosexuality, but that he may make it such as to live with it. The other object is to strengthen his obsessive compulsiveness so as to counteract his gross dependency. patient can become more of an obsessive compulsive, calculating punctual, untidy, caring a great deal for the response of society, the ability that he will be so intent on this that depressive periods will not be as severe nor as frequent, there-by eliminating the possibility of future suicide. It could be stated that the therapist is being directed by the Superintendent in the handling of this quite difficult case, where the prognosis at the best is only fair.

Francis G. Walls, M.D.

As my therapy was progressing, Dr. Walls wanted to know if I had been dreaming. I said as a matter of fact I was having a lot of dreams. He then instructed me to write them down as they happened in order to incorporate these dreams into the therapy. In the weeks to follow there were a number of dreams which Dr. Walls thought were significant. He would always request that I first give my interpretation of each dream.

The following is one of those dreams, as written at that time.

DREAM I

A man in a white coat approaches me while I'm sitting in some sort of waiting room. It must be the lounge of a hospital and he must be an intern.

"Would you come with me?" We leave the lounge and board an elevator just outside the lounge in a corridor. We must have gone to the top floor. I don't know which floor. But I know we were high up.

Leaving the elevator, we walk down another corridor through several rooms of no description and finally into a small room with one bed and all the things that hospital rooms have. However, this room looks old and gray as compared to the bright antiseptic halls outside this room.

The intern gives me a white gown and tells me to take my clothes off and put the gown on. At this he leaves the room without saying a word. Somehow, I was afraid to take my clothes off. After some stalling, I finally strip and put the gown on. I then sit on the side of the bed as if waiting to be told what I should do next. In a few moments, the intern returned. He is carrying a large tray with a hypodermic needle on it. He closes the door behind him and turns to me. "Come here." I slowly get up from the bed. By the time I'm standing he has walked over to me. "This is for you, it's going to be very painful." He takes my right arm and oh so slowly inserts the long needle in a large vein in the forepart of my arm. At first, I grit my teeth against the pain thinking it will be over in a moment. But no, he is just holding the needle in my arm and does not push the plunger. The pain is excruciating, all I can think is to cry out. But I still think he will soon push the plunger and then remove the long stainless steel stinger from my arm. It feels as if it is red hot and my whole body is alive with pain. Why is he taking so long? I said, "You don't give shots this way, please remove the needle, I can't stand the pain. Why don't you give me the medication in the syringe? Please hurry." He looks up at me with no emotion on his face. He then tapes the syringe to my arm with the needle still in the vein. He said, "You must not remove this needle, it must stay in your arm." He then leads me to the bed and sits me down. "Now, you stay in this room and don't touch that needle." He turns away and leaves the room. The pain continues to build until I can't stand it anymore. Frantically, I try to push the plunger in and force the fluid into my body. But the plunger won't move. The harder I push, the greater the pain. Suddenly I see blood come into the syringe, I had pushed so hard that when I let go, the syringe drew some of my blood out. Exhausted from the pain I give up and just hope the pain will go away.

I must find someone to explain what is happening to me. I must get out of this place. Quickly, I open the door and run down the hall to a large desk. Sitting behind the desk is a nurse tending to some papers. She looks, and seeing me becomes quite angry. "What are you doing out here? You are supposed to be in your room, now get back" I answered back, "Why won't someone remove this needle, I can't stand the pain? Why won't the plunger go in.?" She said, "Oh, you don't understand, you're not supposed to push the plunger in. The fluid has to be absorbed into your system. It will take a long time. Now, you must return to your room."

I find myself, now, running as fast as I can. This needle which has brought so much pain is still attached to my arm. I am running from the man, who plunged its bitter point into me, running from the dark gray room, where I do not belong. There must be some place I can go, someone who will put out a helping hand.

Suddenly I find myself standing in front of a strange looking building. Maybe I belong here. This building is small and has match-stick screens for walls. Standing in the entrance, I can see through the match-stick walls. Inside there are many young men, all drinking and laughing. I want to join them. But no one seems to know me. I see so many faces that I think I should know, but they look at me as if I were not there. I want so much to go inside and join them. I want them to accept me, to let me join their fun. There must be someone here who knows me.

As I turn to look into one of the other rooms, my eyes meet with a familiar face. This time he sees me and walks to the door where I am standing. Saying nothing, he holds out his hand and smiles. I could feel him drawing me to him. I could feel myself being drawn into the room.

Suddenly the pain in my arm returns only this time sapping all my strength to the point. I fall to my knees. "Won't someone please help me?" The face that was so kind is now laughing at me all the voices I hear blend into one loud deafening sound, a joke. I closed my eyes hoping to stop some of the noise. Then I fall to the ground on my face.

A pair of hands, so gentle, lift my body from the ground. When I open my eyes, the intern from the hospital is holding me. "I'm here to help you, you must not be afraid, please come back with me. The day will

come when we will remove that needle and you can stand on your own two feet.” The two of us leave together.

I will not go into a long analysis of this dream, because most of it is very obvious. After I read this to Dr. Walls, he naturally asked me what I thought the dream meant. I said that the intern was Dr. Walls, and the painful needle was the therapy. Also, I could not expect to have a fast cure, pushing the plunger in, because psychotherapy takes a long time.

In Dr. Wall's clinical notes, he states, "It is not the object of the therapist to change the person's homosexuality, but that he may make it such as to live with it." Dr. Walls may not have been overtly trying to change my sexuality, but he did not discourage me from moving in that direction.

We spent a great deal of time analyzing the latter part of this dream. He and I both felt the match-stick building was a homosexual hang out. The reason this building was constructed of match sticks was because the building (lifestyle of homosexuals) could be easily blown away, not stable construction. Proof that such a lifestyle is not stable. The reason no one acknowledged me was because I did not belong there. When I was recognized, everyone laughed at me like I was a joke. Proof again, I did not belong there. At the conclusion of the dream, I fall on my face because of my desire to be one of the people (homosexuals) in this match-stick building. The intern (Dr. Walls) picks me up off my face, and in so many words, assures me there is a better way to live.

In the therapy, there would soon come a time where I thought I had been "cured" of being homosexual. Again, Dr. Walls did not discourage my thinking. I am not criticizing Dr. Walls. As you will soon see, he helped me in a great many ways. I believe he genuinely liked me, and perhaps on a personal level he thought if I somehow became "straight," life for me would be much more stable. The acceptance of myself being a homosexual was not stressed as a positive. There was a lot of discussion about the negative side of such a choice. It was believed, at the time, that being a homosexual was a choice and was symptomatic of a deep "sociopathic personality disorder, sexual deviation." Now I know none of this was true.

Dream II

There was a second dream which I now feel came very close to the heart of my problems. The actual dream as I wrote it was lost. But I do remember its importance and some of the images. Dr. Walls and I referred to this dream as the "Foundation House."

The setting is a clearing in a dark forest. The clearing is circular and quite large. At the center of this clearing, which is well lit, is the foundation of a house. I remember the details of this foundation. It was constructed of stone and was four to five feet high. The floor of this would-be house was also there and it too was constructed of stone. Thus, the name, Foundation House.

This foundation was not unlike a stage. In the dream, I found myself standing on this stage in the light with a number of people, one of which was Maggie. I recall that there was, at times, a lot of internal emotions being expressed on this stage.

In one moment, Maggie and I were about to be married. My emotional response was anxiety. In another moment I would be alone, if you will, standing center stage full of fear for my life. I could see at the edge of the forest in the shadows the image of my father every place I looked. In essence I was surrounded by my father who was threatening and lurking in the shadows. I was afraid that he was going to rip this place away from me. He was passing harsh judgments on everything I did on this stage/foundation.

In our interpretation of this dream, the first and foremost symbol was the foundation. It was made of stone. This represented my new-found life. Through the therapy I was establishing a solid foundation on which I would build the rest of my life. We even compared it to the match-stick building which would blow away

with the first strong wind. This foundation was solid, on the ground, nothing could destroy it. Dr. Walls also equated it with humility, telling me I should "have my feet on the ground and my head out of the clouds." I also, years later, would add to that definition, *Once you admit you have humility, you don't.*

This foundation represented my feet planted firmly on the ground. I now wonder if I ever got my head out of the clouds. That's a joke, which you will later understand.

This foundation also represented a new freedom, the freedom to construct the rest of my house. My father's presence in the dream was not unlike his presence in life, always threatening. The residue of these threats was manifested in this dream as the emotion, fear, fear that he was going to take away my newfound personhood. This was not unlike the wolf in the story of the "Three Little Pigs." My house was going to be built of stone. The wolf, my father, could huff and puff all he wanted, but he could not destroy my foundation -- ME.

Maggie's presence and the potential marriage represented still unresolved issues. The emotion was anxiety about responsibility and love. Both, as I understood it were what society expected of me.

Probably more than any other subject that Dr. Walls and I worked on was responsibility. We came to call this "paying the milk bill." This meant breaking the financial dependence I had on my parents. Paying my own way. Getting a job and staying with it. As he said, "to cut the cord, to break away completely from my parents. To become responsible for my actions and willing to pay for the consequences of those actions. To learn to set realistic goals for myself." But most important, the means to those goals had to be equally realistic. This meant learning to curb my appetites in order to keep my feet on the ground. And last, my art should become a hobby, something I did only in my spare time.

Except for what Dr. Walls advised pertaining to my artwork, what I learned through this therapy was sound and would serve, indeed, as part of the foundation I would learn to build my house on. In truth, I was not mentally ill, only misguided. I had not through life to this point, learned the fundamentals of personhood from my parents. I am not trying to blame them for all my misfortunes. It is that they, through their dysfunctions, were unable to give me positive guidance as a child.

There is one last, curious aspect of this therapy which I went through. Almost the entire contents of my early childhood was not brought to light. For example, we did talk about what happened with my Uncle Robert. This was somehow pushed under the rug. The entire perverted early relationship with my mother I could not admit to myself, not until 1992, through the writing work of the letters to my parents, only then I was I finally able to deal with that painful truth. Subjects such as incest, pedophilia (my uncle), child abuse of any nature was not dealt with, somehow intentionally overlooked. Children were the property of their parents, and it was the right of the parents to treat the child as the parents wished.

I was treated by the community of psychiatrists as the deviant and the responsibility of my dysfunctional life fell squarely on my shoulders. I accepted this as the truth.

March 18, 1964 - This patient who resides in Building 9, was seen in intensive psychotherapy by the undersigned four days a week for one hour on each day. He has been gradually becoming more decisive in his planning, more mature with his dealing with himself and others, and less acting out in order to attract attention to himself. This process has been gradual and has caused hurt to himself by the fact that he continuously strived to use the therapist as a form of piggy-back mechanism to carry him through life. This patient has been usual and the substitution of the therapist was merely for that of his father and mother and close friends who he has used throughout his whole life to get what he wanted right then and there without waiting for it or without any thought of his paying for, either financially or otherwise. Certain steps had to be taken by the therapist so that at no time any decision was made, various alternatives were suggested and then asked, "now which of these do you think is the most likely to operate", and if he picked a particular one, asked him what practical steps he had to the particular goal. On one occasion during the past month when he was feeling quite over-

convinced that he was not a homosexual, he had an evening pass out and went into the town and sat in one of his old haunts near the capitol and was completely ignored by the younger homosexuals around him. He felt, depressed, dependent, and upset and as a result of this called a friend who brought him back to the hospital. It should be stated that he had a legitimate pass to be out at the time. Since this type of action was unusual in view of his past pattern, his ego was somewhat deflated since that one would assume that he had always had people flock to him because of his physical attractability. At the present time he is much surer of himself, that he is not a homosexual, that his past indulgences have been due to immaturity, and not progressing from the age of twelve to a normal mature relationship, either with men and particularly with women. In the past month he has had a long sensible discussion with his father, regarding his urge and necessity for independence from the family to stand upon his own feet, something he has not done in the past.

He has ignored any equally, plain straight forward talk with the mother and feels somewhat guilty and anxious about the same. In order to avoid doing the same discussion with the mother, he has avoided her and I feel sure she is at a loss to understand the change which is apparently taking place. At the present time, the patient foresees his future as the necessity of getting a stabilized job. He is hoping to approach people he knows in Colonial Williamsburg. He has other outlets if this should fail, to obtain a small lodging somewhere and to be self supporting. At the same time, he wishes to continue painting in order to have an exhibition of his paintings at the Bull's Head Tavern during the month of June. It should be stated also that he has become more practical in his approach to thinking. Before it was a matter of spontaneous outflow which he now regards as being a neurotic outlet rather than a thoughtful form of expression.

This patient feels that what he regarded as leisure hours when he was with a crowd known as "the Group", he now regards as a waste of free time. He is posing to use this leisure time after work to become equally interested in music for which he has some ability, and in art, teaching painting as well as continuing to paint.

The problem appears to be the cutting of the knot between the patient and his mother, since the mother may be hanging on and on the other hand, she may reach the state where she does not know what is happening. The patient has felt guilty on one occasion in the recent past when he was on a weekend visit to Richmond and found himself looking at young, attractive men in the street, and felt very guilty, but shook it off. He did say that he did not wish to be confronted with any such situation in the future.

It can be said that this patient appears to be on a more stable, mature basis. His present outlook is one of optimism, which the therapist tries to tinge so that in the future when he meets with the hardness of life and disappointments he will not flop back into depression. The main concern was that the therapist should not continue to provide support for the patient to the degree that it was supplied in the past by his parents. It was discussed with the Doctor on the ward and it was discussed with the group in the Intensive treatment, the possibility of his leaving in the not-too-distant future, continued (sic) upon his obtaining some degree of work so that he can support himself and attain his dependency (sic) from the family and at the same time may establish a new, more mature relationship with the family. Undoubtedly some progress has been made, perhaps the weakness in the present progress is some degree of overconfidence that the patient has, perhaps a greater degree of optimism than his maturing state at this time would suggest. However, I do think that a furlough if not discharge in the not-too-distant future is definitely indicated, depending on the above conditions.

F.G. Walls, M.D.

April 14, 1964 - DISCHARGE NOTE:

Mr. Singleton was admitted to Eastern State Hospital on November 18, 1963. At the time of admission, his chief complaint was depression. He received a Diagnosis on December 16, 1963, of

Psychoneurotic Reaction, Depressive Disorder.

At the present time, Mr. Singleton resides in Building 9, where he is a friendly and cooperative patient. He has been seeing Dr. Walls in psychotherapy, and the reader is referred to Dr. Walls' notes. At the present time, the patient does not manifest any depressive features, and it is the [opinion] of his psychotherapist and administrator that it would be of great benefit to leave the hospital at the present time. Mr. Singleton is an artist, and has engaged in such activity while being in the hospital. His paintings are selling at the present time, and he has been able to accumulate sufficient funds to carry him over the period of time that will be required for him to find suitable employment. This writer discussed the situation regarding Mr. Singleton's release with Dr. Walls, and it is our recommendation that he be granted a discharge as "Not Mentally Ill," on April 14, 1964. He is capable of self-support, and shows no impairment.

Herman W. Wallner, M.D.

April 14, 1964 - This patient has been under therapy with the undersigned for four hours weekly since he entered the hospital in the early fall of 1963. Although some degree of insight has been attained by the patient, there have been varying degrees of gross dependency transferred from the parents to the therapist, and latterly a sort of a drift away into a more introverted state of self dependency. This patient has not been completely honest in the latter days with the therapist, in that it was arranged and he was told to slow down before he left the hospital, that he should perhaps make more definite arrangements before going to Florida with his brother and that he should have a definite job to go to. The patient previously mentioned that he was going to Saint Augustine and join the Artist Colony. I believe, although the patient denies this and has fallen in with a more practical plan, I feel that it was done more or less to please the undersigned since he has not the slightest intention of doing so. This is a highly dependent, absolutely immature young man whose parents in the past have treated him as a baby, although he is in this mid-twenties. I spoke both to the patient and to the parents and emphasized the importance of his being allowed to mature and take the roughings in life as well as the smooth ones. There is considerable guilt feelings particularly on the part of the mother who wishes to calculate and know exactly where she went wrong. I believe the patient is still a highly scheming individual who operates exclusively for his own good and will persistently do so. He will continue to cry out for help and the mother will continue to aid him when such cries become known to her.

The prognosis for this patient is quite poor, because 1) he does not have any type of work which gives him public acclaim. 2) Although he has some degree of ability as an artist, it is not sufficient for him to earn a living by. 3) He has very high-class tastes without either the financial ground or the financial where-with-all to fulfill these tastes. The patient is never completely honest, he acts out a good deal. His painting is an act for the benefit of the audience, and although he has attained some degree of maturity it is quite insufficient that he should concur all his past deviations, particularly in the sexual order without more gross trauma scouring. I feel that at least the patient latterly was not well disposed towards therapy and as such the therapist did not oppose his suggestions made both by the patient and through his own doctor that he should leave the hospital. However, in conclusion it should be stated that although some degree of progress has been made, some degree of maturity attained by the patient in the opinion of the undersigned, it is insufficient to hope that the future will be without trouble both to the patient and to society. The prognosis as such is at the best fair.

Francis G. Walls, M.D.

Once again the doctors were so right but so wrong. The prognosis was, at best, fair. The irony of ironies is that they helped me enormously, but they did not know it. What I thought happened in therapy and what the doctor thought were two very different realities. As I stated earlier, I did not know the contents of my

record until 1991. When I read what, I have just shared with you, my first response was hurt. How could the doctor so misread me and at the same time help me?

There seemed to be a double standard. My psychoanalyst, Dr. Walls was what I thought, a friend. He was English and had been raised by Jesuit Priests as a boy. This endeared me to him. He became a surrogate father to me. Throughout the therapy he was also teaching me about psychology, he would sometimes take me on his rounds explaining to me what he was doing. He educated me about life. We did not just talk about my problems. We could go off on long tangents, sometimes for hours at a time. I met his wife and had dinner at their home many times. After I left the hospital and in the years to follow, we stayed in touch and would get together when we could. So, there was a personal side to the relationship with my therapist. You can see why my first response was hurt.

After reading the file several times I became concerned. What if they were right? They were doctors after all, they should know what they were doing. Maybe I have just been lucky with my artwork and life. It did not take long for me to dismiss that thought. Then, I must accept this file as well meaning, but so wrong.

First let me set the record straight. I noticed that there was a marked change in Dr. Walls' notes just before I was discharged. He really started to become negative and made statements that weren't true.

I did want to go to St. Augustine, not to join an artist colony, there was no such place. I had found out through a friend that the following year St. Augustine was to celebrate its quadri centennial with plans not unlike the Jamestown Festival. Through the director at Jamestown, the director of the St. Augustine Quadri centennial Commission was contacted on my behalf. I was a skilled exhibit designer and wanted to get a job in St. Augustine with the Commission in order to get in on the ground floor. The response from the Director in St. August was positive. There would be exhibit design work for me.

Second, I was not planning to go to Florida with my brother. I did have a brother, who along with his wife and two children had lived in Orlando, Florida for some time.

Lastly, I quote "his painting is an act for the benefit of the audience." I know exactly what he was referring to.

It had been suggested that I bring a number of my paintings to the hospital in order to show the entire clinical staff the work. This was not intended to be an art show. The intention, I thought, was hopefully that the paintings could possibly shed some light on my case. Such a meeting did take place. I sat outside the conference room as Dr. Walls presented my case to the entire clinical staff of the hospital. I was then invited in to talk about the paintings. For a change, I was on my own turf. I knew what I was talking about. Perhaps I was not humbling myself before the staff. I don't know. As I said, I was confidant and pleased that through my paintings, I could in some way contribute to my own case.

After the meeting, I wanted to know from Dr. Walls how I did and what artist would not ask the question, "Did they like my work?" His interpretation was that I was showing off, acting out for the benefit of the audience.



For the record: In 1952, when the American Psychiatric Association issued its first official catalog of mental disorders, *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Mental Disorders (DSM-I)*, homosexuality was listed among the sociopathic personality disturbances. By the next revision, *DSM-II*, issued in 1968, homosexuality was moved to the category of "other non-psychotic mental disorders," where it was classified along with fetishism, pedophilia, transvestism, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sadism, and masochism.

On December 15, 1973, the APA board of trustees made the landmark decision that "homosexuality . . . by itself does not constitute a mental disorder."

Finally, in 1986, the APA removed all references to homosexuality in the *DSM-III-R*.

Long Hot Summer

I did go to St. Augustine in the Spring of 1964, prepared to start work with the Quadri centennial

Commission. I had no idea what my life would next be thrust into.

There were multiple reasons for choosing St. Augustine. Maggie had once lived in St. Augustine and during the time we were dating, she told me a lot about her life there.

Maggie continued to see me on a regular basis while I was in the hospital. When I told her, I was considering going to St. Augustine to work for the Quadri centennial Commission, she was excited and offered to help through an old friend she had who still lived there. Maggie's friend, Dan, was a leather craftsman, a maker of sandals. Maybe this is where Dr. Walls got the idea there was an artist colony in St. Augustine. Anyway, Maggie contacted Dan who said I should come on down that he would be happy to help me find my way around, a place to live, etc.

I drove a big old 1957 white, Ford station wagon. I bought this car a few years back in order to haul paintings around. I packed the car with all my painting supplies, my sound system, records and clothes and headed down the east coast to Florida. Upon arriving in St. Augustine, I found Dan and within a day or so, Dan helped me find a place to live, and what a place it was!

Just off the mainland from St. Augustine is Anastasia Island. This Island is a long, narrow splinter of land that hugs the Atlantic coast of North Florida. Heading south on this island were miles of uninhabited beach and there, in all its grandeur, was my beloved horizon, the split between the sky of the east, which would welcome each new day with a sunrise. Below this line, as far as the eye could travel was the mother of all life, the ocean.

Dan helped me find a small two room, second floor apartment on Anastasia Island. Much to my good fortune, this apartment was right on the beach with no visual obstruction blocking this great vista. My new home was at the end of 16th Street at the Atlantic Ocean. All of this for \$75 a month.

I felt very much at home there. This place was not emotionally unlike the wilderness experience on the farm at Clifton. I felt safe with this unspoiled natural environment. My days would begin long before first light. All I had to do was walk a dozen yards or so, and I was sitting at the shore line. Almost religiously, I would quietly wait alone for the sun to rise. Some mornings, I would walk north along the shore, perhaps only a quarter of a mile, where Anastasia Island would end. It was there, during low tide, Conch Island could be reached by foot. This small island was totally uninhabited. At high tide, the shifting dunes and scrub of Conch Island were sealed off from the rest of the world. On several occasions, I intentionally stayed on Conch Island as the tide came in, cutting myself off from the rest of the world. Pelicans and gulls were my companions at the north extremity of this island. I would skinny dip. I would wander through the deep pockets of the dunes. I would think. This place was a refuge for the recluse and romantic that was in me. Shores of undisturbed sand, scrubbed brittle white only by the tide, every 12 hours, forever.

I would add to my visual and emotional experiences the horizon of the ocean, miles of empty beaches and sand dunes. Like the Midwest, I was visually astonished.



The day after moving into this apartment, I went to see the Director of the Quadri centennial Commission. We discussed the project in detail. I do recall they were not as far along as I had been led to believe. We did discuss what my role would be as exhibit designer. There would be a great deal of work once the project got underway, but at that time, the Commission was waiting on funding in order to start construction. I was told that as soon as the state released the funds, I could start to work. In other words, the Commission did not have the money at that moment to put me on the payroll. I remained excited, as I did have the promise of a good position with the Commission. In the following weeks, I went ahead and started design work on some of the exhibits that would be needed. I was assured that it would be only a short time before the funds would be available in order to be paid for my work.

That short time began to stretch out and I was getting low on funds. Fortunately I had already started painting and peddling my wares. Once again, I was able to sell enough paintings to survive.

I have always been what is called a studio painter, working indoors from memory or sketches. On this

wonderful island I thought I should go out on the beach and paint. And so, with that romantic view of the artist with easel and paint box, I found an image I wanted to paint on the beach. I set up my easel and canvas, got out my paints and brushes and with great vigor began to paint a beach scene. A gust of wind blew the easel over, I righted it, sand blew on the canvas and got into the wet paint. I was wearing shorts and the gnats and sand flies started to eat my legs for lunch. If anyone had watched me try to hold on to the easel, swatting at my legs and trying to paint at the same time, that romantic view of the artist at work would have been lost in laughter. Out of frustration, wind, sand and insects, I packed my gear and ran for my home. Needless to say, that was the last time I ever painted on location. I am strictly a studio painter. All in all, I was doing well, the promise of a good job, I was supporting myself with my artwork and most of all, I was living in a natural environment that brought great peace to my soul. My therapy with Dr. Walls had given me a new confidence in myself. I was eager to get on with the rest of my life.

Sometime within the first month after leaving the hospital, I wrote Dr. Walls in order to share with him my good fortune. In addition, I requested from him a large packet of my writings. In an effort, on my part, to help facilitate my own healing, I had given Dr. Walls all the cumulative writings of my life to that point in time. Personally, these writings meant a great deal to me. The following letter was Dr. Walls' response.

May 11, 1964

Dear Mr. Singleton:

Thank you very much for your recent letter received during the present week. Although it has been a comparatively short time since you left us, it seems much longer to us. This is probably due to the fact that we saw you so often during the months that you were here and became accustomed to having you around. However, it was very nice to hear from you and to appreciate that you are getting on so well.

As you are aware, I am in the process of moving, and part of this is to go through my various papers, books and pamphlets I have accumulated in the past two years. Among other things only last weekend did I reread again prior to destroying the papers you mentioned. The reason I did this was that I felt that it was the only safe procedure, since you had expressed yourself quite personally in the papers and which at the time gave me great insight in our therapy. I am very sorry if you had hoped to use them at some future date, but I think even if I hadn't destroyed them in little pieces prior to burning the same, I don't think you would in fact have wished to publish them. They were quite personal, and I think you would appreciate if you just think back over some of them that they were certainly not for public use, and I understood and in fact found them most useful throughout our therapy.

I would urge you in the present, as I have often in the past, not to confine your interests and activities to any circumscribed group such as artists. I believe a wider field of interest will be to your advantage, and with the insight you now have into your problems, I don't think this will be asked (sic) too much of your maturing character. In conclusion, let me say that I hope we will keep in touch. I have noted your address and when I get settled within the next couple of months, I will communicate with you, and since it is highly probable that I will be in Florida certainly within the next year, I hope we can then get together for a cup of English tea.

In conclusion, let me say it was pleasurable to know you and it was some gratification to learn that our therapy sessions were of help.

Yours very truly,
Francis G. Walls, M.D.

St. Augustine is indeed a historic city, tourism being the main industry. Not unlike Williamsburg and Jamestown, the entire community economics is dependent on the tourists. What would happen by early summer, would totally disrupt this economic base and cancel all the plans for the Quadri centennial.

Located in the heart of the historic district of old St. Augustine is the site of the oldest slave market in America. That summer this site became the focus of the Civil Rights movement for the entire nation.

Day and night, there were rallies held at this site. As the summer progressed, more and more Civil Rights activists gathered in this small southern town. By July 4 this had escalated to enormous proportions. The Governor sent a large contingency of State Police. The KKK from all over north Florida and south Georgia were building in numbers. The local black community, combined with many Civil Rights leaders from all over the country had galvanized into one entity. The national press was everywhere.

There were attempts to integrate many of the tourist motels. I recall one incident where a group of blacks got into a swimming pool at one of these motels. The owner dumped lye into the pool. By July 4, a significant date, the leaders of the black community wanted to integrate the "public" beaches on Anastasia Island. The beach chosen was at the end of 16th Street.

During the day, the focus had shifted from the sight of the old slave market to the beach. If you haven't figured it out by now, 16th and the Atlantic Ocean is where I lived. From my second-floor balcony, I could see and feel the hatred of my fellow human beings. The romantic in me was suddenly, once again, thrust into the hard cold reality of the world. This time, in the form of racial prejudice.

Sometimes I am an enigma unto myself. I do not understand the origin of my own values. If values are learned in one's formative years, they would originate from family and peers. If this is the truth, then I should have become a bigot. I also grew up in the heart of the south during the time when segregation was an accepted, not questioned, reality of life.

In yet one more way I was different. I never accepted the racial values of my family or this small community. Please allow me to illustrate. I recall very specific events of my early years, pertaining to racism. But for some reason, the events I remember center around the use of the gross word "nigger." I apologize in advance for the insulting use of this word.

The first and only time I used that word was when I was a young child. I was in the home of a playmate of mine. Their "colored" maid, Ruth, was preparing lunch for my friend and me. My friend and I were talking about what we were going to do after lunch. There must have been several choices. I said, "Eenie, meenie, minie, mo; catch a nigger by the toe, if he hollers let him go, eenie, meenie mine, mo." Ruth heard me, as I said this right in front of her. In a very firm way she confronted me, telling me that what I said was unkind and not very respectful, and that I should never say "that" word again. God bless Ruth. In one short instance, from a child's point of view, I understood prejudice. I felt genuine embarrassment and shame for my insensitivity. I never forgot Ruth or used "that" word again.

A few years later in school, we were studying the Civil War. I was in the sixth grade. It also happened that my great-grandmother had been living with the family for some time. One evening at supper [the whole family always came together for this meal], we always sat at the same places, my father at one end of the table and my great-grandmother Lasater at the other. She was the mother of my father's father. I always sat to her left. This particular evening, I was talking about what I had learned in school that day about the Civil War. Then I made a grave mistake in making what I thought was a rather insightful observation about the final outcome of the war. "You know, I guess it's good the North won the War. If they hadn't, we would still have slaves." Without warning my great-grandmother Lasater stabbed her fork into the table right in front of my hand, which was on the table. As she shook her long, bony finger at me, she said, "Boy, don't you ever -- ever -- let me hear you say that again." I said nothing. Later that evening I asked my father what was wrong with grandma. He told me that grandma had a plantation with many nigger slaves and that her husband, my great-

grandfather, was a Major in the Confederate Army. I was impressed with such a historic past, but it was never something I bragged about.

While I'm on the subject of ancestry, my great grandfather on my mother's side was a full-blood Cherokee. I do remember my mother's mother, Grandma Wallace, boasting that she was half Cherokee. However, this was a source of embarrassment for my mother. It seems my great grandfather and my great grandmother were never allowed to marry since he was Cherokee. It was against the law for a white woman to marry an Indian. My great grandfather was also not allowed to be buried with my great grandmother in their white family cemetery near Bath, North Carolina.

My entire family were racist. They despised niggers and Jews. I recall once when I had gone to the post office with my father. As we walked past the postal service windows, my father stopped and returned to the service window we had just passed. With a rude voice, he said to the man behind the counter, "Hey, Jew Boy." I said nothing, knowing that tone of voice from my father, it was meant to hurt. My mother's favorite line was also in that same character, "no nigger has worked as hard as I have today."

I was a junior in high school when the Supreme Court handed down the decision that segregation was unconstitutional. Shortly after, there were many class discussions about the ramifications of this decision. In one of these discussions, a classmate stood up and almost solemnly said, "No nigger is as good as the lowest white man." I could not believe that any human could say such a thing. Up until that statement, I must have intuitively known that racial prejudice was wrong. When I heard those words, I consciously knew I did not agree. Our teacher said nothing, nor did I.



My friend Dan, the sandal maker, had hired himself out as a body guard to one of the network television camera men. The riots had escalated to a point that anyone known to be sympathetic to the Civil Rights movement, including the press, was at risk of getting an axe handle across the head. Dan knew my position and we joined an underground movement of whites who were in support of integrating all of St. Augustine. This group would have clandestine meetings at night for fear of being discovered by the KKK or the growing number of racists in the region. Basically, all we could do was be of support to each other during this horrific time. I, in particular, was very emotionally vulnerable. I had left the hospital just two months before. I was raw, just out of the crib of protection, not at all prepared for the violence and brutality I was witnessing.

On the morning of July 4, 1964, I awoke early as usual and walked the few yards to the beach in front of my apartment in order to watch the sunrise. The beach was empty, not a living soul as far as the eye could see. Sometime in the middle of the night someone had placed in the sand an eight-foot pole with an American Flag attached. There it stood, right in front of me, the very symbol of Civil Rights, the very symbol of that day. I sat quietly and watched the sunrise and the light of that day fall on the Flag.

Shortly after the sun had risen, I looked south down the beach. I could see what appeared to be a vehicle on the beach moving in my direction. As this vehicle came closer, I could see that it was a pick-up truck with people sitting on the top of the cap, the hood and in the back. As it continued to come closer, I could hear loud voices, combined with loud music from the truck radio. As I stared at the mirage approaching, I became aware of my heart pounding and a sense of dread. The specter approached. I saw confederate flags being waved in the wind of the moving truck. I turned my head and looked at the American Flag in front of me. Then, the truck, which was starting to slow down, as they too saw the flag. Finally, the truck stopped only a few feet from the flag which was directly in front of them. All went silent, there were no jeers as they all guiltily looked at the American Flag. Then, the driver of the truck revved his engine and floored the accelerator. Simultaneously, there were cheers as the truck drove over the Flag. With cheers, someone jumped off the back of the truck, picked up the flag, and threw it into the bed of the pick-up truck.

It seemed only minutes passed before more cars, trucks and people started to fill the beach at the end of 16th Street. By midday, there must have been a thousand people gathered. I wandered through the crowd

in disbelief. I happened to spot a tall blond man with glasses. What caught my attention was that this man had a large professional movie camera. I walked up to him and asked if he was with the press and if he was in danger. He told me he was not with the press, but that he was from Sweden and that he was in this country on a VISA in order to produce a documentary on the United States. He did not know what was happening on the beach or in St. Augustine. I tried to warn him that with that camera, people might think he was with the press and as a result could be attacked. He assured me he was alright. He could not believe any American would harm him. I left him on his own as the State Police had just arrived.

In almost a ritualistic way, the State Police would arrive daily, just minutes before those attempting to integrate the beach. The police would line 16th Street on both sides, creating an 8-foot wide corridor from A1A to the beach. The crowd was at least 20-deep behind the two police lines.

On this day, about 20 blacks, including adults, young boys and girls and a white Rabbi slowly walked down this corridor towards the ocean.

Proud heads raised,
mouths silent.
Eyes fixed on the goal.
Passively tread through
a corridor of cruel lunacy.

Raving frenzy, twenty deep,
a human funnel of hatred,
leading to disallowed shore
under white-hot midday sun
roar of pounding surf
lost in brutal madness
sound consumed by screaming venom.

Bricks and stone lobbed
hitting random black targets.
Only slightly faltering
Eyes fixed on the goal,
where, bathes in forbidden water
kneeling in silent prayer,

prepared to be baptized
in blood.

The crowd reached the boiling point of intense hatred, breaking through the police lines. It seemed everyone had axe handles in their hands. This had been planned. All the cars parked nearby on the beach had stockpiled the axe handles in their trunks. When the blacks in the small procession began to kneel in the water, the trunks of the cars were opened and the handles quickly given out to the heated crowd which immediately attacked all the blacks and the Rabbi in the water.

As I stood in horror, I saw the Swedish cinematographer filming. Off to his side, where he could not see because he was looking through the viewfinder of the camera, a young kid ran up and with his fist, hit the camera lens straight on, shoving the viewfinder through the man's glasses and into his eye. The State Police saw this happen and tried to catch the youth, but to no avail, as the crowd quickly closed in and the kid was lost. There was total mayhem. People running to the water to see the "niggers" get beaten. It would take some

time for the police to gain control. I felt nothing else could be more devastating until I saw the police arrest the *blacks*.

The crowd slowly dissipated. By day's end, the beach was empty and blood stained. Once again, I sat along on that beach and remembered how this day began. Remembering the serenity of the sunrise and the American Flag. From that sunrise to that sunset, 12 hours, the tides would have cycled. I knew my life would never be the same. The incurable romantic had been burned. I, who was the dysfunctional one, I who tried so hard to accept the roles of society, innocently believing that society was right and I was the misfit. As an artist, I knew in my heart the natural world would never disappoint me. The sun would always rise and set regardless of what men did. For the first time in my life I wept from the depths of my soul, as I watched the mother of life purify the blood-stained beach. I knew by the next sunrise all the rancor of man would be washed away.

One More Time

With broken spirit, my pockets empty, I left St. Augustine and Anastasia Island. In the next three months I seemed to be living on automatic, doing only what was necessary to exist. From St. Augustine, I went to Orlando and stayed with my oldest brother and his family since I did not even have the gas money to make the drive to Williamsburg. Within a very short time, I was gainfully employed with Jordan Marsh, a large department store in Orlando, working again in visual merchandising.

I found a small, hot and noisy apartment in downtown Orlando. I was miserable and burned out. There was no natural world, no painting, no freedom. The transition from leaving the hospital to the high expectations in St. Augustine to the hatred and brutality I experienced. I wanted but one thing, to return to the hospital in Virginia. By mid-October, I quit my job and returned to my mother and father's. Without telling them of my plans, I re-admitted myself back into the State Hospital the next day.

ADMITTED: October 23, 1964⁶

VOLUNTARY: This patient is a 25-year old white male, born in North Carolina on December 13, 1937. Economic Status: Dependent. Occupation: None. High school education. No military or naval service. Marital status: single. Abstinent in the use of alcohol. Protestant religion. Previously hospitalized in Eastern State Hospital. Patient is suicidal. No homicidal attempts.

PREVIOUS HOSPITALIZATION: Last Admission: November 18, 1963; Diagnosis: Psychoneurotic Reaction, Depressive Reaction (40-5). Discharged: April 14, 1964 from hospital as "Not Mentally Ill."

REASON FOR ADMISSION: Patient came to the hospital alone from home. Patient had a recurrence of his old problem with anxiety and homosexual activity.

CLINICAL INTERVIEW: The patient talks at length about his problems with adjusting to society, about his tremendous anxieties and, at times, disgust with this thing called society, to which he is supposed to be a part. He, again, is having difficulty with homosexual activity. Interestingly enough, the patient talks freely about his sexual difficulty, but does not care at all to be known as a homosexual by name.

CLINICAL EVALUATION: This is a well developed, well nourished, alert and cooperative while male. He is fully oriented, denies having experienced delusions or hallucinations. His thinking is relevant and coherent. His feelings may be a little flat, and his actions are normal. He has good insight.

INITIAL IMPRESSION: Sociopathic Personality, Sexual Deviant.

⁶ This file has been abridged as a lot of the contents are redundant.

NOVEMBER 19, 1964 -- PRESENT ILLNESS: The patient gives a long and confused story concerning his reason for returning voluntarily to the hospital. He refuses to elaborate. However, it boiled down to the fact that he had some unanswered questions in psychotherapy and desired to continue this.

PAST HISTORY: Medical: The patient states that he was first here in 1959 after three suicidal attempts, and that he was here a year ago at which time he had psychotherapy for seven months, getting quite a bit of insight according to him.

PART PROGRESSES: Gross Identification: The patient is a neatly and appropriately dressed white male in no distress.

PERCEPTION: His orientation is good.

INTELLECTION: His memory, judgment, and reasoning are good.

THOUGHT PROCESSES: Normal tempo, rhythm and organization.

THOUGHT CONTENT: There is no evidence of delusions or hallucinations.

EMOTION: Slightly depressed and slightly hostile.

DIAGNOSTIC IMPRESSION: Psychoneurotic Depressive Reaction

PROGNOSTIC INDICATION: Apparently good as this patient has the intelligence to benefit from psychotherapy.

In trying to remember back to 1964 and why I returned to the hospital, which according to the record there was some question as to what motivated me to do such, I will share with you a draft of a letter I wrote to Dr. Walls which gives an accurate account of my state of mind at that time. This letter was written shortly after my admission. Dr. Walls was no longer on the staff of the hospital, in fact, he had moved to Florida.

November, 1964

It has been some six months since I last saw you. A great deal has happened, both good and bad. I will try to explain, the best I can, the events of the past months, and the many changes which have taken place in my character.

As you know, when I left the hospital, I had a great deal of self confidence in myself and what I wanted out of life. For the first time in my life I can see and judge a problem without any artificial coloring⁷, or what I might call protective coloring. Life has become very real, almost to the point of being startling. I see this protective coloring in society and the unfortunate reality that it is not recognized as such. It is recognized as "normal" or acceptable.

The events which took place this summer in St. Augustine which I am sure you have read about in the newspapers. This crisis lowered men to his lowest common denominator "the beast in all of us." This became evident and dominated every member of this community. I have never seen such hatred for "your fellow man," regardless of color. The most outstanding and shocking element displayed was the desire to kill.

"Kill him, kill him, drown him, the white nigger, look at the white nigger. They're worse than a black nigger."

⁷ The term "artificial coloring" came from my therapy with Dr. Walls the year before, which was defined as: the many ways of coloring our actions with unrealistic behavior, such as justifying a lie, misleading or covering up in order to protect the ego; artificial implies false -- the false self.

A group of white women stood on the beach and screamed this as their husbands and sons tried to drown a white youth, who was known to be a "nigger lover." I was that youth.⁸

This is just one of countless episodes which opened my eyes to what man can be. I saw the same hatred displayed in the form of sophistication. People could accomplish the same devastating end, but in a way much more acceptable to society.

Recognizing this element in man and knowing that it is not just an isolated case, I must accept the fact that it (hatred) exists in myself because I am just HUMAN.

I also have discovered that this protective coloring is a necessity. One cannot exist without it because the world is not "normal."

It is like trying to put a square peg in a round hole. My self being the square peg.

Before I tell you what I have been doing, I would like to back-track and give you some idea of the way I felt when I left the hospital and what I now think I got out of our therapy.

Through our therapy, I discovered all the unrealistic facets of my life, all the ways I could justify my actions. "The trunk full of means to get my own way," the defenses of the ego. One by one I eliminated these because they were blocking my maturity. Then, we replaced them with the ability to be a realist in my approach to life. To set a realistic goal and the means to that goal to be equally as realistic; to understand "independence" and last, but not least, the final and complete break from my family, or as we would say "pay the milk bill." After leaving the hospital, I had to put all these discoveries into practical use. I must say that I accomplished these things with almost little effort.

You gave me an undistorted picture of the type of person I used to be and gave me the fortification to stand on my own two feet in the future.

All of this has brought on an even more devastating turmoil in my life. I no longer seem to fit. Why? Because I have no protective coloring. When I get caught up in the ever-moving storm of society, I panic. Why? Because I know that it is wrong, it is abnormal. It was this abnormal world that sent me to the hospital the first time (with all of my defenses for survival in that world). How can a person be realistic in an unrealistic world? Protective coloring. How can you have protective coloring when it is unrealistic. How can I survive this world?

I did not mail this letter to Dr. Walls. It remains in the journal I started shortly after I admitted myself, this last time, into the State Hospital. I had also learned not to turn my writing over to the doctors, due to what Dr. Walls did with all the material I gave him.

January 11, 1965 - PRE-RELEASE NOTE: This 25-year old white male was admitted to Eastern State Hospital on a voluntary basis on October 23, 1964. On this admission he has been diagnosed as Psychoneurotic Reaction, Depressive Reaction. This patient has requested in writing, that he be allowed to leave the hospital. He has expressed his desire to me personally, also. He has been in personal therapy with Dr. Ashbury. Dr. Ashbury has been consulted about this patient's discharge, and he is in agreement that we should discharge this patient. Therefore, I recommend that this patient be discharged into his own care, considering that he is in fairly good mental condition, and capable of self support.

CONDITION OF DISCHARGE: Not Mentally Ill.

IMPAIRMENT: None

JANUARY 12, 1965 - DISCHARGE NOTE: This patient is today discharged from the

⁸ Yes, I was that youth. I did not mention it until now, because I wanted to express this event through this letter. The letter was written just months after the fact.

hospital as "NOT MENTALLY ILL" in accordance with the preceding pre-release note.

A Note to the Reader

July 24, 1995

After just completing the previous piece, I feel genuine anger, full of judgments! I want to scream with outrage, 31 years too late. I was so gullible, so trusting of the doctors, society and my parents. I was the so-called villain!

Intellectually I understand every event as this story is being told. All the principal events and people of my life had, to this point, aimed an accusatory finger at me. I was harshly judged as a self-serving, sociopathic, homosexual.

The letter to Dr. Walls, was in part hostile. I was, and am now, angry with the bigotry of humanity, who with lily-white gloves professes to be all-knowing of the right and wrong of its citizens, when, in fact, it is hypocrisy that rules the day.

"If only," the two most tragic words in the English language. If only I knew then what I know now. I am angry at myself for not taking a firm stand on my convictions. For not looking hypocrisy square in the face and calling it what it is. Humanity is frightened of itself, frightened to speak **its** own truth. The unfortunate reality of that statement is a catch 22. It is the human condition, to be intimidated by knowledge. Ignorance and prejudice reign high. To deny our single purpose for living. To love unconditionally, which at the moment I have a great deal of difficulty doing.

If, during one of my hospitalizations, there had been a magic pill designed by society, I would imagine that pill would do the following. All who took this pill would become white, blue-eyed, blond, heterosexual male bureaucrats. If society had its way, it would, by its standards, pick the ideal and make us all clones. To illustrate how gullible I was, so trusting of the "system" I would have gladly swallowed that pill. Thank God there was not such a pill. However, now and in the near future, I wonder?

My rage at the moment is high, but I also recognize that from the 50's and 60's we, as a people, have come a long way towards the ultimate truth. But we are slow . . . so very slow . . . to move to an enlightened species. The one institution that should be blazing a path to this enlightenment should be the church. The fly in the ointment flawed, manmade, dogma, idolatry and hypocrisy have become holy rites, sanctimonious unto itself, an institution of greed. How many times do you hear from the pulpit the true meaning of loving your fellow man unconditionally, as opposed to the manmade dogma of separatism, differentiating the diversities of humankind. " Because you are different, therefore I am and you are not." Please let us learn to celebrate our *differences* along with our likenesses.

It was February 13, 1959 when my father first took me to this hospital and on January 12, 1965, when, for the last time, I was discharged into my own care.

For six years I took the responsibility for the first 19 years of my life. Trying, with all I was, to right "my" wrongs. Trying to untangle the complex web of those beginning 19 years of life. I trusted and believed in those doctors. Now, I know, they too were doing the best they could with all that they were. But, in so many ways, they were so right, but so wrong.

I was never mentally ill, just different.

**All that was ever needed was acceptance
as a HUMAN . . . BEING.**