
Summer, 1992

In A NutShell

A Publication of the MENTAL PATIENTS' ASSOCIATION



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Cover Collage: Titled 'In the Shadows, Our Gold' by Bettina Sluzski Lewis, a Vancouver artist, whose expressive subjects of the human figure 'spring from a vast source deep within my being, yet common to all of us, touching not only on the personal but also on the collective.'

'In A NutShell' is a publication of the Mental Patient's Association, 1731 W. 4th Ave. Vancouver B.C., V6J 1M2, (604) 738-2811. The MPA is a non-profit organization that offers a variety of programs in HOUSING, VOCATIONAL, RECREATIONAL, and SOCIAL ACTIVITIES for former mental patients. For more information on any of the above programs or housing waiting lists, please phone the office at 738-2811.

Editor: Jim Gifford Co-Editor: Dennis Strashok Page Lay-out on PageMaker Software

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual writers and not necessarily those of the MPA. Donations toward the cost of "In A NutShell" will be graciously accepted by the MPA.

Court Workers Assist Mentally Ill

The MPA Court Worker Program assists the mentally ill in dealing with the Criminal Justice System. Working out of the Main Street Court House, they identify persons on the court lists who have mental problems.

Marilyn Sarti, Court Worker Manager, has been involved in the job for 11 years. She and her assistant, Jeanine Heaton, recognize some of the disturbed individuals. Others are referred by the Crown, police, nurses, lawyers, the sheriff, or have been seen by doctors. Sarti says 'days get spent visiting in the jails and interpreting for lawyers.'

The workers see these people get legal counsel of their choice or legal aid and also do an in-depth interview. They help with the bail hearing on the first day, talking to judges. If the person gets out, he/she may be referred to shelters such as Triage or Lookout. They are also introduced to a Mental Health Team. Sarti states that all this is strictly voluntary.

The disturbed individual may see Outreach Workers Karen Vanderveen or Michelle Jokai on a daily basis. Located at 149 Main street, these two women see regular clients who might be doing community work service. They make sure bail, probation, and court dates are not breached. Generally, they keep things from getting out

of control. As part of their outreach work, they do psychological rehabilitation such as giving birthday parties, having get-togethers for coffee and lunch, and maybe an excursion to Granville Island or the Seawall.

Sarti points out that the Court Worker Program deals with the least functional members of society. These people cannot get on housing waiting lists; they are at the bottom of the totem pole.

The crimes committed are petty thefts and minor acting out such as hassles at busstops, spitting. Most are victims themselves and are seldom dangerous or hurtful types. The Court Worker Manager says 'If they've got a psychi-

atric problem, they don't belong (in jail) and we try to get them out. If we get them accommodation and they are willing to report to us, judges are likely to give them probation on these minor charges.'

These people come mostly from lower income families who are embarrassed by their illness, don't have the resources to deal with it and feel at a loss. The mentally afflicted person is basically deserted and left alone to be with his/her problem.

Sarti states 'the combination of being poor and disadvantaged is deadly. They are the bottom of the socio-economic heap and just get ground up in the system.'

You may contact Marilyn or Jeanine at the Court Worker Program:

Phone 687-1985 or Pager No. 7385.



Nutshell Co-editor Dennis Strashok questioning a pitch at Harry Cragg Memorial Softball game and Barbeque, Ceperley Park, June 15

Mental Health Act Review

by Olaf Wirsching

Just recently, the Discussion Paper on Mental Health Legislation was distributed to MPA members. This paper was prepared by the Ministry of Health and is the result of a year of consultation with individuals, community organizations, care-givers, and mental health professionals. In fact, the consultation process is still going on, but the Ministry must reconcile the many different and conflicting views in order to introduce proposed changes before the legislature this Fall. The issues covered are: involuntary admission and detention; treatment, informed consent and capability; confidentiality and access to in-

formation; independent administrative review. Other issues have to do with discharge from hospital; the application of legislation to children, and the application of criteria at discharge.

The review of mental health legislation is being done at the same time as new guardianship legislation is being proposed. The purpose here is to develop a complementary relationship between the two, so that dependant adults who do not meet the involuntary admission criteria but appear to be suffering from abuse, neglect or self-neglect have access to advocacy, informed consent to

health care, review board appeals, representation agreements such as a substitute decision-maker, court-ordered decision-making and guardianship. The Ministry of Health is still seeking input from interested parties on the Discussion Paper. In addition to written submissions, public meetings will be held in Kelowna, Prince George, Victoria, and at Riverview Hospital. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage MPA members and staff to review the document and to send written comments to Dr. John Gray, Coordinator, Mental Health Act Review, Mental Health Services, Courtyard Level, 1520 Blanshard Street, Victoria, B.C., V8W 3C8. All responses should be received no later than July 31, 1992. Please refer to the section number and paragraph of the Discussion Paper to which each of your comments is directed. Additional copies of the paper and its companion, "How Can We Help?", - a discussion of adult guardianship, are available from the CRC Library and Media Centre.

Laughs with Lewry

Did you hear about the
dyslectic agnostic insomniac?

He stayed up all night wondering
if there really is a dog.



Psychoanalysis

Freud is the father of psychoanalysis. It has no mother.

Germaine Greer

Unity Housing Proposal

by John Hatfull with Jim Gifford

Working in the MPA Community Resource Centre during drop-in hours, I see lots of people who have great difficulty with the system. Generally, they have trouble getting assistance because they lack the educated know-how, are not well-mannered and, sometimes are very sick. Also they cannot get into ordinary housing since they need considerable support. But, over the years, I have found that, enabled to clarify and develop goals, they aspire to get themselves better, in all regards. Unfortunately, when one is at loose ends, it is hard to know where to begin.

I propose to work towards the creation of a society whose goals are to get people together in order to be educated, better housed, and to develop basic social and domestic skills.

These housing units would be essentially personal support groups. We would like to focus on individual wellness so that, when

one reaches the point of feeling well enough to reach out for help, fellow members of the household are there to suggest avenues of resources and doors of rehabilitation.

Such housing would comprise of people in the mental health system who are on a friendly basis, banding together. Large houses with several bedrooms would be the ideal. Looking through the newspapers, I have found three places a week that meet our criteria! \$1500 to \$1700 a month rent, each member contributing \$300 to \$350,

I want to create homes such as the one established by friends in the Eastend. It is made up of hard-to-house MPA members. I see they are proud of their home, a forerunner of the Unity Housing concept. The general public might consider them poor people who cannot get their act together. They would have a hard time getting on the MPA

Count Your Blessings

by Sam Roddan

At my age, nudging 78, I'm very much coddled by family and friends, honored as a "Golden Ager", offered lifts to Peace Walks, shown off to house guests, consulted and deferred to on my opin-

ions on weather, politics, geriatrics, child rearing and the poetry of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

Well-intentioned friends

Continued on page 9

400 member waiting list. Many of these people are living in desperate housing situations and in the streets.

Five areas are on my agenda: the Eastend, the North Shore, South Vancouver, Burnaby and Kitsilano. I want to create homes in each one. Each house would stay autonomous but be part of the associated network of houses.

You might ask why I think this will work. In the old days at MPA when I was first a coordinator, "the inmates ran the asylum"; we had no heirarchical board of directors. The total membership voted on every issue, upholding the ideals of the MPA. We were the final say.

On the surface this would seem an impossibility, You would figure chaos to be ready to break out. It did not! However our meeting were a stage on which people acted. If a member was having mental difficulties or some other problem, he or she would tell everybody what was happening. The 200 members in MPA knew each other intimately.

I want to recreate this feeling of comraderie in the proposed Unity Housing. When people have secured their basic needs they can aspire with positive energy and the bonds of friendship to go on to further education, land a job, and perhaps find a companion and settle down.

It is never too late to hope and realize lost dreams.



Chemical Dependency Group Formed

The MPA has formed a chemical dependency group called 'Stepping Stones' whose weekly meetings are led by Jirina Judas and Barry Hames. Moral and material support has been provided by Executive Director Barry Niles.

This self-help recovery group is open to anyone who feel they are having problems with alcohol and/or drugs and have had contact with the Mental Health system. We wanted the group to reflect the needs and the character of its members. 'Stepping Stones' differs from Alcoholics Anonymous or more structured programs offered by the Dual Diagnosis Clinic, St. James Social Services and other agencies since it is democratic. The group has been largely responsible for the nature of its

growth and continues to change.

Rather than competing with existing programs, 'Stepping Stones' founders Jirina Judas and Barry Hames are finding other groups to be excited and supportive of their efforts. There is nothing like it in the city and everyone is anxious to see it succeed.

Very little attention has been paid to the problem of chemical dependency among the mentally ill. While schools, corporations, military, and other government agencies have had programs for their people, the mentally ill have had almost nothing. But this is not to say the system is unconcerned. The wheels are grinding slowly, yet things are happening. In 'Stepping Stones' members are giving as well as receiving help,

becoming part of the solution rather than the problem.

As facilitators, Jirina and Barry keep things moving in a safe and productive way. Group members participate at their own pace in the belief that no group is helpful if people do not feel secure and comfortable.

Informality of the hour-long meetings works well although Barry Hames says 'we could use some input from more women'.

Anyone who feels they could benefit from 'Stepping Stones' or might be able to contribute are urged to contact either Jirina Judas at 731-2566 or Barry Hames at 682-1479. Meetings are held every Tuesday, 7pm to 8pm at the MPA Community Resource Centre, 1731 W. 4th Ave.

We look forward to hearing from you.



The Poor

It is only the poor who are forbidden to beg.

Anatole France

Editorial Comment

by Jim Gifford

In the past few months, there has been some discussion about changing the name of the Mental Patients' Association to something less revealing.

Those who advocate the change say the present terminology is stigmatizing and demeaning. Some of these well-intentioned people would like us to be the Mainland Phoenix Association.

Personally, I do not sympathize with them. Such a new name would be elitist, phony, and, let's face it, we would be camouflaged in the phone directory.

UnderDog by Jim Gifford



For those who have not thought through the issue, mental illness is a stigma. Many patients and members of society-at-large are guilty of this false attitude. To

The Mental Patients' Association tells it like it is. In this saccharinized age, when garbagemen are sanitary maintenance engineers, and bagboys are customer service representatives, let's hold the fort... and be upfront.

In Alcoholics Anonymous, even if you've been dry for years, you say 'I am an alcoholic.' The potential is always present. We are mental patients and I feel it is important to be clear about it. Let's call a spade a shovel!

I am reminded of singer-songwriter Don McLean's hit

'Vincent'. It tells of how the Artist, Vincent Van Gogh, 'suffered for his sanity'. It is very close to my heart. People must come to realize that we are not rapists and murderers, but rather sensitive souls caught up in an aggressive, competitive world.

The cost of changing the name is estimated at \$30,000. We could buy lots of coffee and food for that price. The time has come to get real and challenge society to accept us as we are... persons with gifts, talents and abilities who have been through dis-ease.

I advocate wearing the Mental Patients' Association title like a crown of thorns and transform it into a Winner's Laurel.



ponder the roots of mental 'disease' is to see the experience in a new light.

R.D. Laing, the noted anti-psychiatrist, wrote of the 'voyage of discovery' that takes place. Schizophrenics, manics and psychotics are explorers of psychic realms seldom, if ever, journeyed into by 'normal' people. In this 'healing sojourn' inner reality manifests as visions and hallucinations: seeker becomes seer.

The apparent dysfunctional behaviour in day-to-day activity stigmatizes the eccentric as mentally unbalanced. The individual's unique values and insights are considered by psychiatric personnel as unworthy of 'nor-

mal' life and his/her experience is demeaned, dehumanized, and demoralized within an institutional setting.

Carl Jung remarked 'the deeper the crisis; the rarer the spirit'. Interestingly, in primitive cultures the novice shaman undergoes a manic-schizophrenic crisis in his/her rite de passage. This 'wounded healer' is a visionary into the natural underworld of dead spirits and the mystical abodes of the animal, plant, and mineral kingdoms. When this guided initiation has run its cycle, the now full-fledged shamanic

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A Poem

by Karen R.

As we near the dawn
Of the twilight hour,
There will be a great
Releasing of hidden power.
Motivated totally
By forces unknown,
Only then will it
Surely be shown
The power to heal
And kneel alone.
Time will tell
Who is our twin:
The one left behind
Because of our sin.
To meet again
From faith alone
And come to terms
With all our clone.
The agenda shows
The time is right
To release ourselves
From our hidden fright.
And allow the current
To pave its flow,
Creating a pathway
Wherever it may go...
And blaze a trail
Where others can follow.
To find a place
That's safe and hollow.

There Was A Time

by Patty Belliveau

There was a time when you could
pick a flower
There was a time when you could
feel the power

There was a time when you could
sing a song
There was a time when people
would sing along

There was a time
without doubt
There was a time no one
would kick you out

There was a time when personalities
were like fleece
There was a time when people
would cry for peace

There was a time when people
wore beads
There was a time when people
smoked weeds

There was a time when everybody
had a cat
Now I guess is the time to say
that's that

Interview with Allison Webb

Allison Webb, 7-time Canadian Judo Champion, is a replacement coordinator at West 7th house and will be competing this summer at the Olympic Games in Barcelona Spain. She was interviewed over lunch at Greens and Gourmet Restaurant in Kitsilano.

Editor: What made you focus on Judo at the age of twelve?

Allison: I probably would have gotten into Judo earlier if my mother hadn't discouraged me. I grew up with three older brothers who were rough boys. I think I had a sense of vulnerability very young, so I was interested in taking some sort of martial art. My father wanted me to take Judo rather than Karate because it was defensive.

We moved to Spokane from Ontario when I was twelve and I joined an athletic club and they had Judo there. I loved it right from the start.

Editor: To what character quality do you credit your success?

Allison: I am good at focusing in on a single goal and pursuing it single-mindedly. In University, I dropped out of Judo for a while because I couldn't balance two different things very well. But

since I finished university, Judo has been my focus. Whatever else I've done has fit in with Judo. It really has involved my whole life. When I walk I'm thinking about Judo; when I'm running I'm doing it for Judo. I think I focus on one thing better than a lot of people.

I've definitely had some physical advantages, I'm very strong. There's a lot of genetics parts to that.

Another thing is that when I was growing up it wasn't fashionable to be fit. A lot of girls in Judo would dropout at about thirteen because they'd have a conflict with their development. I didn't have that conflict. From very young I wanted to be strong, fit and self-sufficient. I had my own values.

Editor: What is the philosophy behind Judo?

Allison: It depends on the club how much spiritual philosophy is taught. Judo has been exposed to me as a sport. I started out in the States and the Japanese influence there was small.

My philosophy has changed. When I got into Judo, I wanted something to compete with my brothers. In a sense I wanted a weapon and I was very competitive when I started. Competition was life and death.



Now, I have to work up a competitive attitude. I am much calmer. I don't have every little day battles. Especially with the

UnderDog *Continued*

healer returns to communal life as a central and vital human being.

Unfortunately, in our present material-mad world, such chosen souls are cast aside, fringe members of society whose voice is unheard, ignored or ridiculed.

Perhaps, one day, this transcendental 'voyage of discovery' will be revered and reflected upon by a sick civilization in need of similar healing through the power of rebirth.

Perhaps, those who have gone through a 'mental breakthrough' will, at long last, find a place in the sun.



Interview with Allison Webb

Continued

coach I work with now, there is a philosophy, a way of life that is centred around Judo. He is an extremely gentle person. His use of Judo is a way of being in harmony with the self and the world.

So, I've developed a much softer side, partially because I've gotten older. Judo, the way I was taught it was very hard. Because I've gotten older, I couldn't practice that way or injuries would occur. I'm thirty now and I wouldn't have lasted this long with that kind of practice. So now, if someone gives me a good throw, it's not a threat to my ego.

Editor: At the moment you are a replacement worker with the MPA Housing Program. How has this changed you? And what are your plans down the road?

Allison: I will stay involved in Judo in some way. I got involved in the MPA two years ago and Housing Manager Steve Scott has been good to me. He's allowed me the flexibility in my schedule to train. I'm very grateful to the MPA and not just for accommodating me but also it has been very good experience. My changing attitude to competition, being non-competitive... a lot of it has to do with seeing how people faced with anxiety about every day events, how harmful competition is in some ways.

At a higher level, it bothers me when I go to an international tournament, other competitors won't smile at you. They'll almost glare. I mean we're all in this game, we're all good, and yet they have this attitude.

Ultimately, the goal for

Count Your Blessings

Continued

give me the wink and ask, confidentially, of course, if there is anything to the efficacy of garlic or ginseng in pepping up the libido.

In some societies, when a man and woman have outlived their usefulness, they are quietly embraced, then led into a blizzard, abandoned on an ice flow. No more pampering and coddling. Only a brief, yet solemn farewell.

By the year 2021 there will be more than 6,000,000 "Golden Agers" in Canada. Robert Evans of the University of British Columbia has argued that "other medical issues pale beside the

question of aging".

Sometimes I get these feelings of renunciation, self-sacrifice, the saving of precious resources. Why can't I make some heroic gesture for the generations yet to come? I've had a good fling at life... surely I'm not afraid of blizzard or ice flows?

After recent open-heart surgery, and a close encounter of the last kind, in the recovery room of a local hospital, a host of ministering angels flitted around me. I was cold as an ice cube. Dull fear gripped at my throat. A sepulchral voice declared, "It's all over!"

anybody, or let me just say the goal for me, is to develop myself into the best person I can be. So, in a sense, I am competing with myself, pushing myself to attain a higher level. And that is the same thing that everybody is working with. People are at different levels. Maybe someone I'm working with at the house, their goal might be tolerating the anxiety of being in a group. They're still pushing themselves to a higher level.

That's what I think it is about. It's an individual thing, just trying to better yourself as a person.

Editor: Thank you, Allison. Best of luck in Barcelona!

Allison: Thank you.



I choked out anguished cries for help. A plea for a second chance. Forgiveness for past sins. Promises to give my all and much, much more to the yet unborn. But in vain. I heard again the same voice, only clearer, more insistent, "It's all over!"

A light blinked above my head. A rush of oxygen filled my lungs. Ah, fool that I was! The operation was finished. Not me. I started to recant. Swallow my promises. Offer simple prayers of gratitude to doctors, nurses, nurses aids, orderlies, hospitals, medicare.

Then, with a beautiful smile, I took time out to count the cost, and my blessings, one by one.



Bookworm

Under The Viaduct

Homeless in Beautiful B.C. by Sheila Baxter

In this excellent and revealing study of homelessness, Sheila Baxter has put a human face on the plight of the downtrodden.

While it possesses incriminating statistics against our economic policies of social elitism, it is the actual stories of real people that gives the book its guts.

The pain, humiliation, and loss of dignity suffered by those who fall through the system's cracks is written about with the

compassion and understanding of someone who's been there.

Sheila Baxter exposes the falsehood that the homeless are victims of their own folly. She lays the blame on politicians who are not dealing with the problems our economic way of life has created: property flipping for quick profits; tearing down low rental units and putting up expensive condos; inadequate minimum wage; and other dilemmas that a greedy and callous attitude has created and

made a plight and blemish in communities throughout North America.

With her focus on Vancouver, she gives the stories of those who are homeless, under bridges, on the streets, and in the cockroach infested hovels of Skid Row hotels.

This very human book on homelessness is a great service to the cause of fighting this injustice. Sheila Baxter's study, 'Under The Viaduct', is timely and stimulating for those who want to face up to our society's shortcomings and are seeking insights and avenues to follow in the cure of this present tragedy.



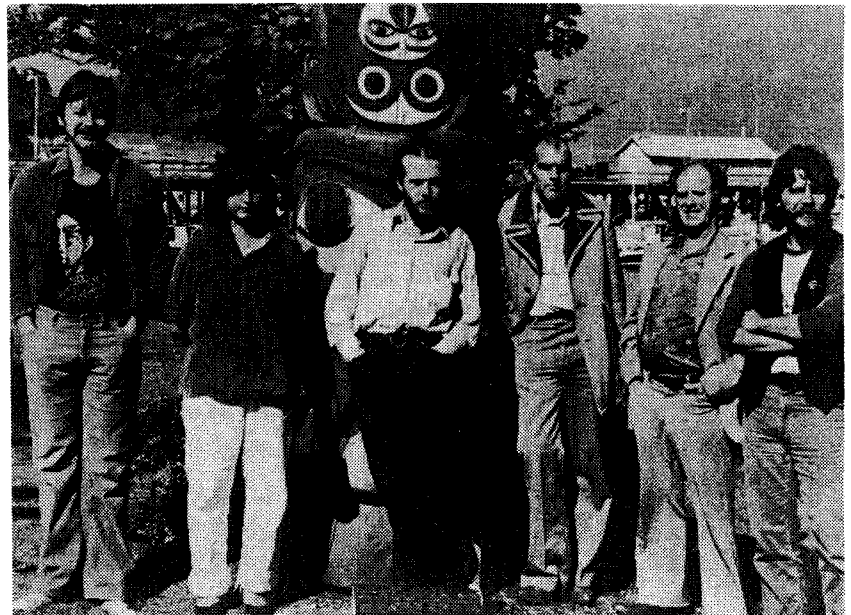
In Memorium

Harry Cragg, 35 years, May 29th, 1992

Harry was a talkative soul who sought out social companionship at the MPA. I can clearly see his tall, lean frame chuckling over some absurdity that amused him.

When loneliness and psychic pain finally became too great, Harry found his refuge in that great mystery beyond life in this world.

Peace Be With You, Harry.



Harry Cragg, far left, with MPA members, Horseshoe Bay, 1981

Pastoral Reflections by Pastor John Ballard Kitsilano Bible Church

“My God, my God, why have you deserted me?” Mathew 27:46

Have you ever felt like God is far away from you, or even worse, has deserted you? Jesus felt like that on the cross when he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you deserted me?” Because of the veil between the seen and the unseen world, there are crisis times when we feel we are all alone and no one cares. In the midst of such crises, however, we often find we are rescued just when all seems hopeless. Part of it, no doubt, has to do with survival mode kicking in, but another part is spiritual and mysterious.

We are often comforted by what, in saner moments, we would brand as coincidence or sheer happenstance. It is this element of belief in the unexplained that often rescues us from destruction.

For Jesus on the cross, His cry of abandonment is “Eli, Eli, lama sabach-tha-ni?”. This is an Aramaic phrase, closely related to Hebrew, which developed various dialects. Aramaic or Hebrew was the colloquial language of Palestine in New Testament times. It is probably safe to assert that our Lord habitually spoke Aramaic and occasionally Greek, and read and could speak Hebrew.

The casual observers at the cross did not understand what Jesus was saying. Some thought he was calling on Elijah, the Prophet. To some it was non-sensical or gibberish. They didn't understand it. But to those of us who have been wounded we understand something of the joy of the non-sensical. To the Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (pen name, Lewis Carroll, author of 'Alice in Wonderland') humans can understand without a lot of conscious baggage and so he penned his famous 'Jaberwocky', which, no doubt, is one of his most creative works. There's a time and a release in expressing your pain in whatever moans or groanings that you wish to express. Others don't need to understand since we're not talking for their benefit. However, that's how, often times, we get branded as being crazy. Let us realize that we're not crazy; we're just seeking to survive in the midst of pain. Let's listen a little closer to Jesus on the cross.

“Eli, Eli, lama sabach-tha-ni?” is an Aramaic phrase from Psalm 22:1, which when interpreted means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Obviously, Jesus is mumbling this Psalm to himself on the cross. As a young boy in the home of Mary and Joseph, this would have been

his homework assignment after his chores were done. This was his Primer. He must learn the Psalms by heart. It was the duty and joy of the Jewish parents to see their son study and memorize the Word of God. The Psalmist writes, “They word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee”. Jesus is repeating Psalms 22 to Psalm 31 on the cross. It is his way of dealing with the pain.

But why those particular Psalms, you might ask. The answer is quite obvious as you study them. First, they reflect His feelings at that moment and secondly, they distract Him from focussing on the pain. Even more importantly, the Psalm eventually leads to the final bedtime prayer of a Jewish boy, “Into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” (Psalm 31:5). He is reassuring Himself that, though He presently feels deserted, the darkness will lift and the light will come. He is stating His faith that, after the storm, the songbird sings again. After the cross comes the resurrection.

So, when you feel that it's all over for you, and there is no hope, remember that when Jesus felt that way, the hopelessness eventually lifted and faith returned.



Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmar

Some years ago, a Czech-Hungarian couple, reminding me very much of my own parents, came to consult me about their 23-year-old son who was still living at home but was becoming more and more difficult to live with. He was threatening to become violent, wouldn't listen to good advice, so the parents were considering the possibility of having him locked up by the police, or committing him in a mental hospital. The distraught mother actually blurted out, "I wouldn't want to see him hurt, except through a doctor!" The parents thought their son was insane because he wanted to make a living selling and manufacturing Aeolian harps, beautiful stringed instruments that play eerie music when the wind blows through them. Why didn't he want to go to business school and take over Dad's business? Why didn't he want to be a doctor or a lawyer? He must be ill, mad or very bad! In my experience an explosive situation such as the above doesn't call for police or hospital, but for a midwife. It's time to separate: we have to get born and we have to give birth many times in a lifetime. After a man-to-man chat with the son and a few more sessions with the parents, he departed to England to seek his fortune.

It isn't always so easy to effect change and reduce tensions. Ruth is in her fifties and her son, Bill is almost thirty. For over ten years now, Bill gets into trouble, and Ruth crusades to help him.

When he is not in jail or hospital, the two of them travel all around the world, looking for the right treatment. Have son, will travel! When they consulted me, I got the impression that Ruth was much more in need of help than Bill. Ruth was a know-it-all, loquacious nag who wouldn't or couldn't listen to what anyone else had to say. If I were Bill, a stay in hospital or in jail might be a welcome relief from mother's company. But does he have no other way to separate? Perhaps, not. Mary Barnes in an autobiography about her psychotic condition explains the origins or her brother's emotional breakdown: "He was caught, stuck in his anger. No one knew he was angry... The tangle of emotions of my family was so intense that automatically one member struggling free must be killed, annihilated, rather than the grip be loosened. Such was a fear of the truth. Madness was a step on the way to truth. It was the only way". I suggested that Bill stay here, ask to join MPA, and figure out himself what he wants with his life, while Ruth was to go home to Toronto and get into therapy for herself. But Ruth was in a hurry, they had to pack and travel to San Francisco where she located a hypnotherapist who was sure to be of help for Bill!

It was over 30 years ago now that R.D.Laing demonstrated that schizophrenia was a social event and that all symptoms become intelligible in the social context of the patient's family. Enduring interpersonal situations can presumably lead to enduring biochemical changes in certain persons, but that's a result, not a cause.

Masking is the word used for efforts to conceal some very disturbing situation within the family and to act as if it did not exist. The dread of retribution should anyone stop colluding is so overwhelming that few dare to risk unmasking the truth. And that goes for professionals as well, Laing, Alice Miller, David Cooper and others who expose the truth about crazy-making families are punished by neglect and by being pushed to the fringes, so the mainstream can ignore them as crackpots.

And yet, it's not about blaming. Ruth is not to blame, she is caught up in something every bit as much as Bill is. At times, the hypnotic knots and binds and double binds come from many generations ago. Ibsen, in 1881, wrote in Ghosts: "I am half inclined to think we are all ghosts... It is not only what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers that exists again in us, but all sorts of old dead ideas and all kinds of old dead beliefs and things of that kind... And we are so miserably afraid of the light, all of us".



