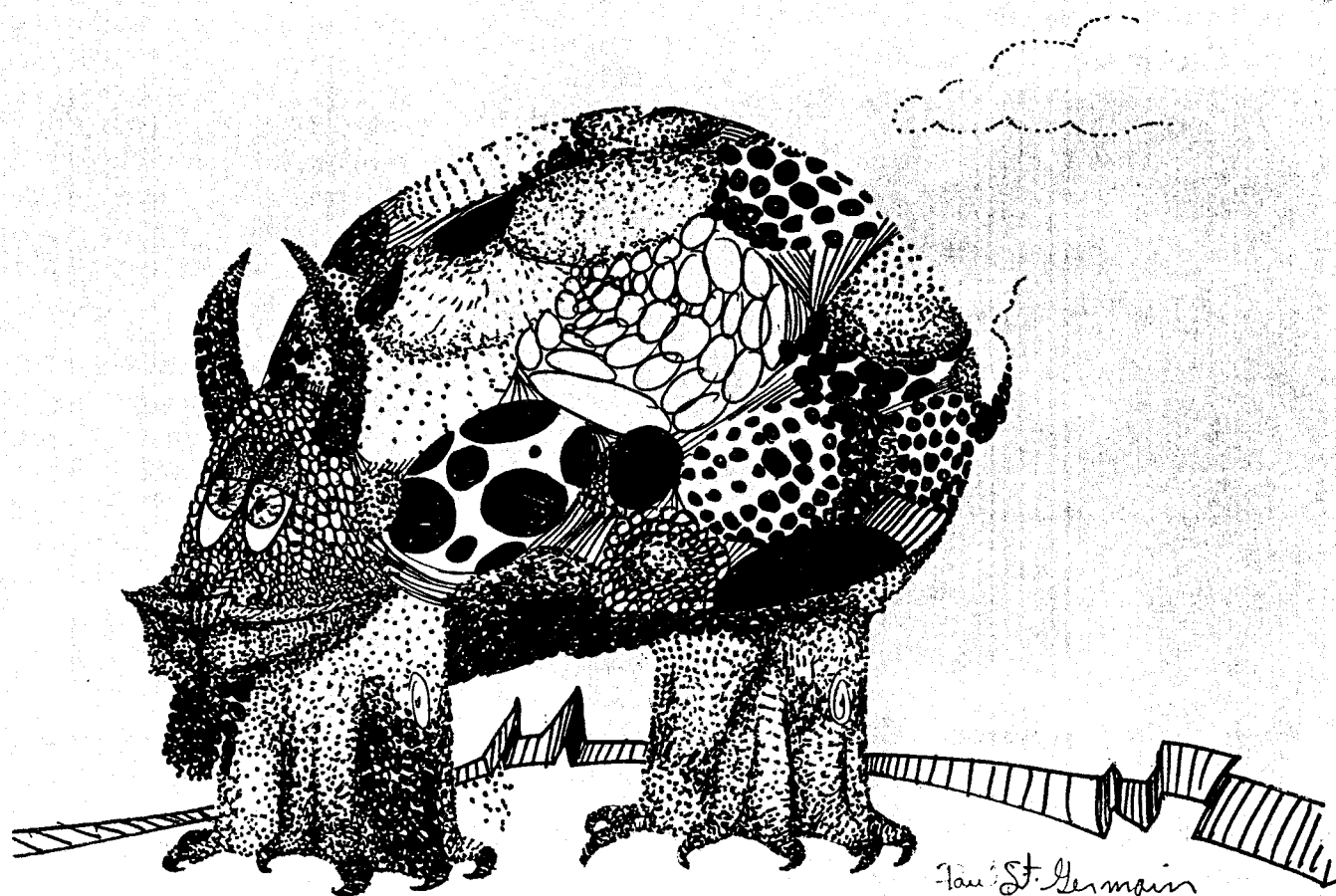


Spring, 1993

# In A NutShell

A Publication of the MENTAL PATIENTS' ASSOCIATION



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**Cover Drawing:** by Paul St. Germain

'In A NutShell' is a publication of the Mental Patients' 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 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 magazine 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 MPA.

**George:  
A Composite of the 610 Mentally  
Ill in Downtown Eastside Not in  
Receipt of Mental Health Services  
from Report by  
L. Ralph Buckley, M.S.W.,  
Strathcona Mental Health Team**

George is a Caucasian male, aged 36 and English speaking. He completed his grade 10. He is single and lives alone in a hotel in the downtown core. He has moved at least once in the last two years from one hotel or roominghouse in the downtown core to another. He has lived in British Columbia over five years. He is attracted to the downtown core because of its low rents, its services and the personal attachments he has formed.

George does not like his current accommodation because of the lack of cleanliness (i.e. cockroaches), the noise, and the large number of people with severe alcohol and drug problems. He does, however, prefer to live alone. What he would like to have for accommodation is a clean, secure and affordable self-contained suite which is close to amenities and support services. If such housing were to be offered outside of the downtown core he would likely relocate.

George's physical health is reasonably good and he has little problem with his sleeping patterns. He does, however, smoke over a pack of cigarettes a day and this is not healthy. Furthermore, the expense of cigarettes cuts into the money he should spend on

food. He is fairly knowledgeable about AIDS and knows where to go to obtain testing.

At an early age George had contact with the mental health system and although he was told what his diagnosis was, it was not explained to him. He feels that perhaps the diagnosis fits but he has a great deal of ambivalence about it. He also took medication but eventually stopped because of adverse side-effects. George has spent time in a psychiatric hospital on at least two occasions. On one of the occasions he was feeling suicidal and on the other he was stressed out to the point where he felt unable to cope. On discharge, no follow-up plans were made.

George also has had contact with a mental health team and initially he found the experience helpful. He eventually dropped out of treatment because he changed his mind and felt he was not being helped. Moving also made it difficult for George to maintain his contact with the people he was seeing at the team. George is ambivalent as to whether he wants help now.

What mental health services George would like to see implemented in the downtown core are drop-in centres, more mental

health centres with increased staff, more low-rental housing, better emergency help, and more one-to-one counselling.

After coming in contact with the mental health system, George changed his goals and ambitions by lowering them. Occasionally, George thinks about committing suicide. This is usually when he has feelings of his life being stagnant and repetitious with no point or purpose and no way out. Alcohol doesn't help these feelings either. In the last 6 months George has had at least one psy-

*Continued on page over*



*photo by Brahm  
Mike Kinal and friend at Science Museum*

## George: A Composite

*Continued from previous page*

was not as a result of the consumption of drugs or alcohol.

George drinks but it is not clear how serious a problem this is for him. Generally he does not do drugs. What he likes most about substances is the relaxation and lowering of stress it gives, the good feeling of being high and the forgetfulness/escape it provides. What he dislikes about substances is the hangover/after-effects and the cost. George has attended AA meetings and likes them for the group support, the understanding, the acceptance, and the socialization they give. On the other hand, he dislikes the preaching and dogma as well as some of the people at the meetings who never change and always tell the same stories.

George has been arrested and convicted and has spent time in jail for minor offenses. He liked the food he received in jail better than what he obtained while in the psychiatric hospital. George has also been victimized in the past 6 months both physically (i.e. robbery) and psychologically.

George would go to a drop-in in the downtown core especially if it were open late every night. He would like to see such a drop-in have television, show videos, have games, and provide free coffee and tea. It should have a relaxed atmosphere where he can meet and talk to people, particularly women. Lastly, it should have trained, experienced staff from whom he could obtain counselling if he

chose.

George keeps in contact with his family. He often has what he considers an intimate relationship, and if he experiences a crisis he usually has someone he can turn to whom he trusts. What he does on evenings and weekends is watch TV, go for walks and read. The places he most likely visits are the Carnegie Center, parks and friends' places.

The most important people in George's life are his friends and family. The four major places in the downtown core where George can go and feel comfortable are the Carnegie Center, parks, the Evelyn Sallers Center and coffee shops.

George feels his life provides him sufficient psychological freedom, but financially he feels he has no freedom whatsoever.

George can read and write. His employment history, however, is poor. The longest job he ever held was around 2 years. He has not been employed at anything in the last 6 months. George likes work because it gives him money, a sense of accomplishment and improves his self-esteem. On the downside, aside from the general stress of working, he finds the long hours difficult to deal with. In addition, he often receives ill treatment from his co-workers. Poor pay does not help either, especially if it is close to what he obtains on social assistance. George would like to be employed at some general labour job like janitorial

work.

George is on social assistance. He receives \$602.48 a month. He spends \$315.04 on rent and claims the balance of his money is spent as follows: food \$162.00, cigarettes \$83.68 and alcohol \$69.92. When added up these figures come to \$630.64 which is \$28.16 more than George has. Since these expenses do not include items such as clothing, transportation, hygiene needs, laundry and entertainment, obviously George's financial situation is grim. George feels that he would be able to get by on \$890 a month.

George eats about two meals a day, not three. The items he consumes the most are sandwiches, soup and vegetables. He generally eats at home but two weeks after cheque day he runs out of money and then he attends the free food places. George spends \$5.63 a day on food. When he has the money, he will often go to the Evelyn Sallers Center as the meals there are quite inexpensive. George has been losing weight lately as a result of his poor nutrition.

George has to share his toilet and bathtub with others in the same building. He does not like the lack of privacy nor the sanitation problems this presents.

George is in need of clothes, particularly rain gear and underwear. He generally buys his own clothing. He will, however, go to some of the free clothes places but finds he often cannot obtain the proper fit.

On a typical day George

*Continued on page 5*

# Triage: The New and Old

by Gian Ward

You are out on the street and in crisis; you need help. What happened? Maybe you were robbed on cheque day, a knife held discreetly against your ribs; or maybe the hotel manager unjustly blamed you for a broken window, and evicted you on the spot; sorry, no refund! Or maybe, hallucinations driving you crazy, you went to the hospital, only to be back on the street two days later, homeless and confused. With your last 25¢, you call somebody - your Financial Aid Worker, your Care Team, your brother, anyone you can think of. Next thing you know, you're on your way to Triage.

The approach to Triage is not at present encouraging. You walk down Main Street, under the Georgia Viaduct, to a squat grey building, whose pretensions to Greek architecture are incongruous with the graffiti on its walls and the Cobalt Hotel across the street. You pick your way through a most unappetizing scrap yard and descend a well-hidden flight of steps to a door inscribed not, as you might expect, 'All ye who enter here, Despair!', but, 'Welcome to Triage.'

Your next few days are very interesting. You meet a remarkable variety of people, and inevitably some of them will be not what you are used to; but you will find yourself welcomed and

befriended by most of your fellow-residents. The snoring and farting in the dorm (be it Men's or Women's) may drive you crazy; but the bedding and mattress are clean, and you are sheltered and safe. You may not approve of everybody's table manners; but the food is good, a balanced menu three times a day. You may not like all the staff; but they come from all walks of life, and you will be heard and offered good, practical suggestions by someone who fully understands your present crisis. You survive your first visit to Triage, and may well be surprised to find yourself going back for a visit from time to time.

In two months' time, the New Triage is opening at 707 Powell. It will still provide food, shelter, and practical assistance to those in crisis, but under far more pleasant conditions. There is a clean, bright cafeteria, and each resident will sleep in a large single room. The pest-free environment will help you to feel much more positive about your future; the staff, freed from endlessly unplugging toilets and mopping up foul floods, will have more time to assist you.

The New Triage is not only an emergency shelter, however; there are a number of studio apartments, some with million-dollar views, for women and men ready to live independently in the com-

munity with some support. Staff will be available from 8:00am to 10:00pm daily, offering assistance with lifeskills, budgeting, etc. Those who wish to can join the meal program in the shelter and visit there during the appointed times. This quality affordable housing is for GAIN recipients who are consumers of mental health services living in or near the Downtown Eastside. Rent is one-third of income, and applications should be made to Judi O'Brien at Triage, 669-7901.

The New Triage will not meet all the desperate needs of this city for safe shelter and dignified housing; but it is a vital step towards a recognition by our society that street people and consumers of mental health services have a basic right to refuge in crisis, and the option of a home that is fit for human habitation.

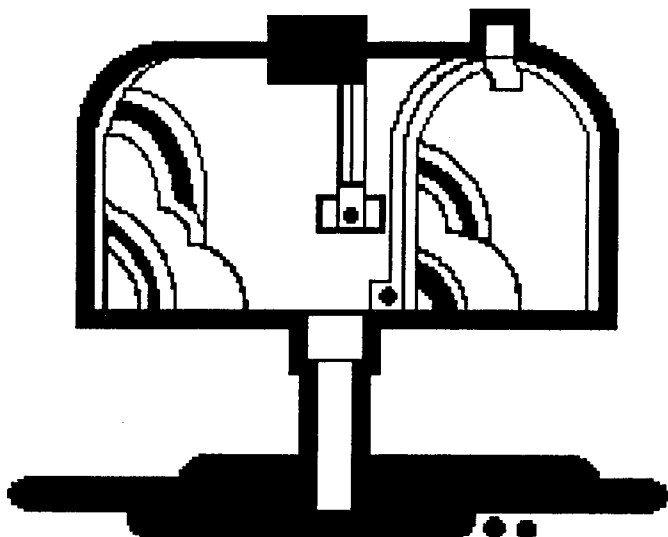


## Insight

'The heart that breaks open can contain the whole universe.'

Joanna Rogers Macy

## Letters to the Editor



Carel Moiseiwitsch,  
518 East Georgia,  
Vancouver, B.C.,  
Canada,  
V6A 1Z9,  
(604) 253-2053

Dear Editor of "In A NutShell",

Thank you for sending me your magazine. I have been reading it for about a year now and applaud your efforts to support the ongoing struggle for better understanding in mental illness.

However, I really object to Andrew Feldmar's column. His misogyny is like a looped tape, mindlessly repeating itself. We mothers will not take the blame for mental illness anymore! We have learned to recognize violence even when it's disguised as "help" from Big Daddy/therapist.

Feldmar's views are rooted in the patriarchy with all its fear of losing control. Grow up Feldmar and read the writing on the wall, come and join the grown-ups and let's work this out together.

Carel Moiseiwitsch

Saitama Comprehensive  
Mental Health Center  
818-2 Komuro, Ina-machi  
Kitaadachi-gun, 362  
Japan

has just established in February 14.

We would like to exchange information of self-help activities each other. I hope that you will continue to good support to consumers.

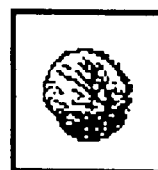
Sincerely yours

Noboru Hirosawa

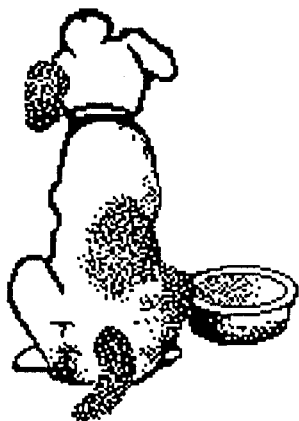
Dear Mr. Niles  
(Barry Niles is the Executive Director of MPA)

I deeply appreciate your kindness to accept our visit. We are very delighted to study various programs provided by MPA. Particularly, we recognized that there are differences of housing.

Self-help movement is growing in Japan. Self-help groups are getting active in Saitama. Mental Patients' Association in Saitama



## UnderDog by Jim Gifford



The majority of civilized men and women are caged in the conscious realm of the mind. Only a few access the primal depths of the unconscious. Artists, musicians and poets are among those who penetrate the creative emptiness of the brain's right hemisphere. Often brilliant and eccentric in originality, the artiste's perceptions and perspectives reveal the 'thin line between genius and insanity'.

Mental patients, who have also plumbed the darkness of the human psyche, are caught in the dichotomy of 'mystical deep freedom', born of the creative impulse, and the web of conventional ways of acting and thinking. Whereas the 'normal masses' accept what society says and does as right and true for the most part, those experiencing pangs of psychological growth fathom the 'illusory veneer of world ego'.

Like the neophyte in aboriginal communities, they are cast into the wilderness for a time of trial. This 'rite de passage' is a sojourn into 'life's mystique' and is expressed by voices, hallucinations and delusions of grandeur.

The 'ultimate' delusions of grandeur are the patriarchal 'I Am God' or perhaps the christocentric and archetypal vision: 'I Am Christ'. For the individual to view this experience as a hierarchical revelation creates in him/her a feeling of authority and omnipotence. However, the individual may see the world with a pantheistic vision, all things being equally imbued with the essence of the universe, the 'Spirit of Being'.

In Western Civilization, many such souls find themselves in mental asylums because of the metaphorical language they use. They are misunderstood by linear thinking people who sense they are at odds with and totally unacceptable to the safety and survival of society-at-large.

To conform is to have a name, a family, job, status, coun-

try... in short, an ego. In breaking the traditional mould, this apparently aberrant behaviour threatens the status quo. Thus the 'possessed' person is doped and brainwashed by psychiatrists in a reorientation process. Yet there are no victims for, in Cosmic Consciousness, there is no 'you and me', only the 'universal dance'.

Native peoples, tuned in to the natural world, live this intuitive reality. During initiation, the 'noble savage' is thrust into the wilds. He/she allows the forces that flow through all things to take hold. This is the path to becoming a medicine man or shaman. Those imprisoned in mental hospitals are likewise 'shamans-to-be'. In surviving the 'psychic spiral of change' into 'sacred personhood', they too may become 'wounded healers'.

Despite the boundaries and divisions set up by society, such persons may get 'out of the trap'.



## George: A Composite

*Continued from page 2*

the proper fit.

On a typical day George will walk around the neighbourhood, watch TV, drink coffee or tea and visit friends. George views his two major problems as obtaining money and food.

Occasionally finding accommodation also becomes a problem. By far his major worry, however, is the lack of money.



## Branches Over the Wall

### Striving and Arriving

by Dennis Strashok

All of us who are mental patients or former mental patients have endured a peculiar set of circumstances and, as a result, we have been changed and internally rearranged so that the problems which we now face are not necessarily the same as those of the general public. Many of us, when we ran into the 'wall' of hospitalization were not aware that anything was wrong. We truly believed that we were trying to live our lives freely and some of us even believed that we had entered into a higher 'special' realm of reality. But, when we ran into the wall, especially if we did so repeatedly, that 'free self' and 'higher reality' were judged as not being acceptable. The result is a long search for identity, an identity in balance, where we are able to live out in society and not end up being hospitalized again.

The peculiar problem that is a result of hospitalizations and not being accepted is to give up totally, as if to say, "That was me and you couldn't receive it, so I will give up trying to be me." What happens then is that the search for a balanced identity is given up and the individuals become passive, not caring about what happens to them and not making any effort to change or better their lives.

I have heard that the medical profession has a term for this. After the Korean War many Ameri-

can Veterans came back to the States with a malady the doctors called 'give-up-itis'. They had seen and known so much hell that they just didn't want to try any more and the result was 'give-up-itis.'

Well, all of us have been through a peculiar kind of 'war' and some of the battles we have been through have been heavy and fierce. The result is many veterans, who have just given up, content either to exist without growing and changing as people or without taking care of themselves, or even worse, ending up committing suicide. There are no answers in any of those options.

I have heard endless reams of 'psychiatry' about self-assertiveness and goal-setting, but when I realized for myself that I really wanted and needed some goals in my life, then things began to change. There is amazing power in having a dream or vision. One day you turn around and look back and realize that one of the first steps in achieving your goals was in being able to articulate them clearly, if only to yourself.

Medication, too, has its side-effects, and many of us know what it is to spend days in a grey haze, sleeping endless hours, and having little energy. This is not what I'm talking about here, for I have found one of the truths in reaching out after goals is to know when the medication is holding

me back and when it is just my own laziness that is holding me back. An essential part of finding our 'balanced identity' is getting stabilized on proper amounts and types of medications (which takes years for some of us). So let's all find the doctors and medications that will help us to go on and get back into a life of 'striving and arriving'.

Spirituality is great, too. In my own life a faith in God has been a source of great strength and comfort, even in the worst times. But there is a teaching in some spiritual schools that we must 'Let go and let God', nevertheless I say unto every one who has been put down, broken, harassed and abused by the system, "Don't let go, don't give up, keep on hanging on with everything you've got for the true meaning of spirituality is to work together with the Divine in an active, ongoing relationship, not passively letting God do everything."

Finally, I'm trying to say something here. I'm trying to reach out, get underneath you, lift you up and say "Keep on striving and you will arrive - reach forward toward your goals - be true to your vision and the result will be a fruitful rewarding life and all that goes with it. Take it from one who's been there. When you keep on picking yourself up and going on, one day you turn around and your pleasantly surprised at how things have changed and how far you've actually come towards arriving. Don't give up."





## Laughs with Lewry



Patient: 'Doctor, I think I'm a dog.'

Shrink: 'Come and lie on my couch.'

Patient: I can't. I'm not allowed on the furniture.'



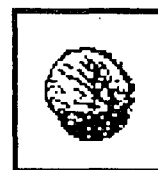
photo by Brahm

*Al with his new design of a narrow  
table built for small apartments*

## News Briefs by Scott Dixon

A dating service for the mentally ill? Yes! It's happening in New York city. Alice Cohen, the mother of a mentally ill son, runs the Friendship Exchange which matches up people with schizophrenia or severe mood disorders. Her clients say the kind of loneliness suffered by the mentally ill is something that can only be understood by people who've had the same experience. No wedding bells yet, but lots of new contacts.

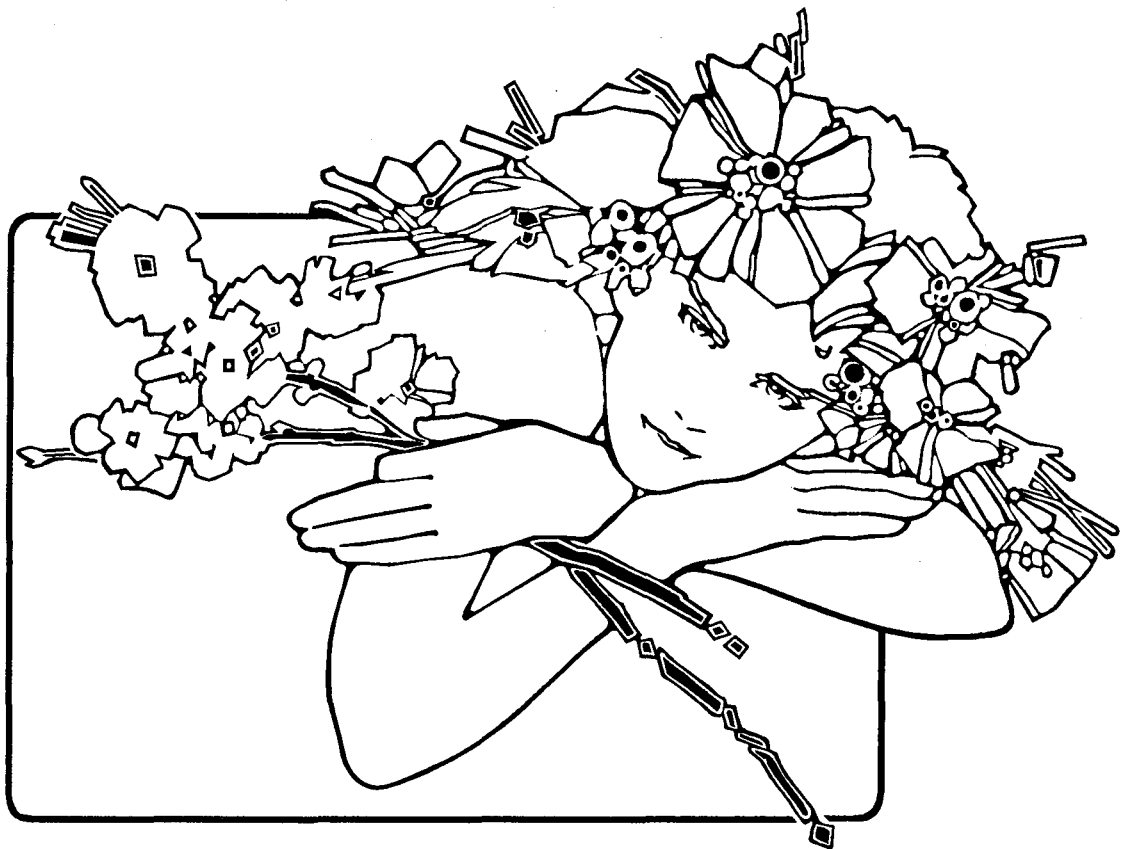
An American researcher swears Mozart suffered from Tourette's syndrome, the mental illness marked by twitching and outbursts of cursing. Dr. Benjamin Simkin, an endocrinologist at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles studied almost 400 letters written by the famed composer. Over 60 of the letters contained vulgar outbursts, focusing mostly on the buttocks and defecation. Such curses are characteristic of Tourette's.



## Love's morning flower

by Richard Clements

still tasting the sweet honey of love's morning flower  
    my tongue's caress  
        on full-ripe rubied melon tips  
    proud thrusting buds of hotly pulsing power  
and clasped between parted twin-silk wetly pouting lips  
    filled with fierce desire  
    deep inside you  
    I turn to ashes in your raging fire  
in the eager warmth of your surrendered heart's embrace  
    hungry questing arms whisper softly come  
    and with urgent pressing mouth upon my face  
I rise erect.  
    bathed in myriad precious drops of choice perfume  
    and burst in an incandescent paradise  
        the thirst-quenched waiting treasure  
        of love's inviting rich device  
as our need explodes across the sheltering murmur  
            of languid sun-shot skies  
and suckled smiling Venus spins the glistening langour  
    of fragrant fresh-milked dew  
    on opened trembling velvet thighs  
I lie here counting countless shooting stars  
    burning bright in those two dark mystery pools  
    that hold the liquid amber of your loving quiet eyes  
and feel a heart beat next to mine  
    every beat a potent cup of wine  
    holding my body and my mind suspended  
in dreaming worlds of time-forgotten  
    misted ecstasy  
    that is your sweet...  
        sweet tasting love for me.



**BookWorm**  
**Beyond Therapy, Beyond Science:**  
**A New Model for Healing the**  
**Whole Person**  
**by Anne Wilson Schaef**  
**Reviewed by Andrew Feldmar**

R.D. Laing noted that the obvious can be very difficult for people to see. This is because we don't want to be disturbed, and we are skilled at sidetracking, hiding, literally shutting our eyes if necessary, to information. Schaef in the book under review states the obvious in simple, non-technical language and yet I bet her book will be ignored and quickly forgotten by the professions of psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy. Not unlike Laing's own life's work is being marginalized.

What is then Schaef's disturbing observation? It is that "When we treat people as things or 'its', we are destructive to them". She rejects all techniques, interpretations, believes that theory interferes with awareness and healing. She exposes the myth of objectivity, and instead proposes a fully participatory, deeply subjective way of being with each other, allowing deep process to unfold in their unique, unpredictable ways is what she finds most helpful, most healing. To attend another without interference, witnessing what happens, just being there, keeping company, is the most one

can do. For this no professional qualifications are necessary, no training in psychiatry or psychotherapy or psychology. The most successful facilitators are people who have faced their own deep inner processes, people who are recovering themselves.

Schaef demonstrates that professionalism is bankrupt, and that what is most healing is community, the persistent presence of support networks. She would agree with Scott Peck, who in his latest book, A World Waiting to be Born, says, "Community is a 'safe place', where all the players feel free to speak their minds and where their voices will be listened to with seriousness. It is an environment in which differences are not only allowed but encouraged. It is a group whose members have learned to fight gracefully so that ethical stones are not left unturned and the tension is not abandoned. Introduce genuine community and civility takes shape as a state of conscious courage and community-mindedness. Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve-Step programs served as inspiration for Schaef but she goes be-

yond them. The state of mind she is after, for herself and for people she attends, she calls sobriety. That is because she thinks we live in an addicted and addictive society, which provides as pain-killers countless addictions to mask our suffering engendered by the way we live. She accuses most therapists for being codependents, enabling their clients to continue with their addictions and their crippling lives. She writes, "codependents do not know the difference between love and control, so they choose a profession in which the two are fused. Codependents tend to focus upon others and get their validity from caretaking, so they choose a profession in which they get paid for it. Codependents thrive on others' dependency upon them. Therapist are trained to believe that it is their role to be in charge of the situation, to know what others need".

Although I find her vocabulary restrictive and her ideas on addiction a bit over-simplified (e.g. she doesn't distinguish between addiction and devotion), I think she has done a great service by calling attention to the autonomous nature of healing which cannot be controlled only allowed by two or more people entering into an honest, caring community of egalitarian relationships.



## Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmar

Melville, in reference to Jonah cultivating his own little garden, trying to ignore God's voice, has the preacher say, "Woe to him who seeks to pour oil on the waters when god has brewed them into a gale! Woe to him who seeks to please rather than to appall! Woe to him who, in this world courts not dishonour!" The only voice I hear these days that doesn't come from the world or from my own conscious thoughts, occurs in my dreams. Some time ago I dreamt the following: "I enter my office to start a therapy session with a man who has entered some time before me. He is seated, but everything in my office is thrown about, the plants are uprooted, the television broken, furniture torn. He expects me to proceed with our session, but I get busy righting the environment. I think of throwing him out, calling the police, but instead I find myself in a narrow alcove or corridor, facing him. Both our backs against the wall, I press both my feet into his groins, wedging us very tightly. His face gets distorted with pain but he doesn't fight. As I wake up, I hear him say, "I am tired of being good!". Thomas Szasz spoke once of insanity as insubordination to the rules of polite behaviour; to parent, husband, or wife; in short to civilian authority. Madness is mutiny. What am I to do with the madman within me? Woe to me if

I were to placate him, tranquilize him... but I cannot just let him loose on the world, can I?

An iconoclast is a person who attacks established beliefs, ideals, customs, or institutions. This can be done with blundering cruelty or with skillful means. Either way, one is likely to wreak havoc. The man in my dreams wants change. When "Be good!" means, "Don't change!", sooner or later something has to break. Inside or outside. Madness or mutiny.

Integra Households Association has been proposing an alternative to psychiatric hospitalization, now for almost ten years. Integra is for people who want to take responsibility for their own healing process and participate in a community where others are also trying to change what they can to make the most of their life. In a household sponsored by Integra there would be no externally imposed rules, therefore no need for insubordination, mutiny, madness. No one would pretend to know better what's good for another than that other. No one would be manipulating others into a desperate struggle to construct a newer and

better—but false—persona. Such an asylum would operate under a feminine, affect-guided pragmatism, which recognizes differences among souls and nurtures what is here now rather than what is to be.

Novalis, a pioneer of the spirit, said that the road to free will and personal freedom must lead through deception. Madness is perhaps such a way station on the road to sanity. In an asylum I worked in, a very angry man broke all the windows of his room. He did this repeatedly, after each time we had them fixed. It was less expensive to pay the glazier than it would have been to tranquilize him. A naked woman lay on the floor, digging her fingers into her anus and getting out small globs of feces which she was smearing on her hair and face. It was far less disgusting to gently help her to have a bath in the tub than it would have been to witness her undergo a course of ECT.

To date Integra is still seeking support, both political and financial. Integra is not aggressive. I would define aggressiveness as energy applied to reduce time and/or space and/or cost to reach a desired objective. A seed can be driven to become a bomb, growing up can be hurried into blowing up. Love is not efficient and yet what could be more optimal?



## What Do You Do All Day? by Scott Dixon

"What do you do all day?"

The question came without warning in the middle of a dinner party with old friends, people I worked with when holding down a job was still possible. Everyone else at the table stopped talking and looked at me. This was a question everyone was interested in, apparently. but how could I answer? How could I justify my inability to work? How could I justify myself?

"What do you do all day?"

It's a hard question to answer without sounding defensive; a question that would never be asked of someone with cancer or broken limbs. But because the wounds of we who are mentally ill aren't necessarily visible and because most of us go to considerable effort to hide the pain and severity of our illness from others, we're fair game for questions which, by their very wording, are judgemental.

"I get through the day," was my answer that night.

Conversations resumed around the table, although I pretty much just listened. One couple, facing a fifteen hundred dollar mortgage payment every second Thursday, talked about nothing else all night. Another guest left early to catch an overnight flight so he could get back at his desk in a job he hated by nine in the morning, Toronto time.

I felt like a visitor from another planet.

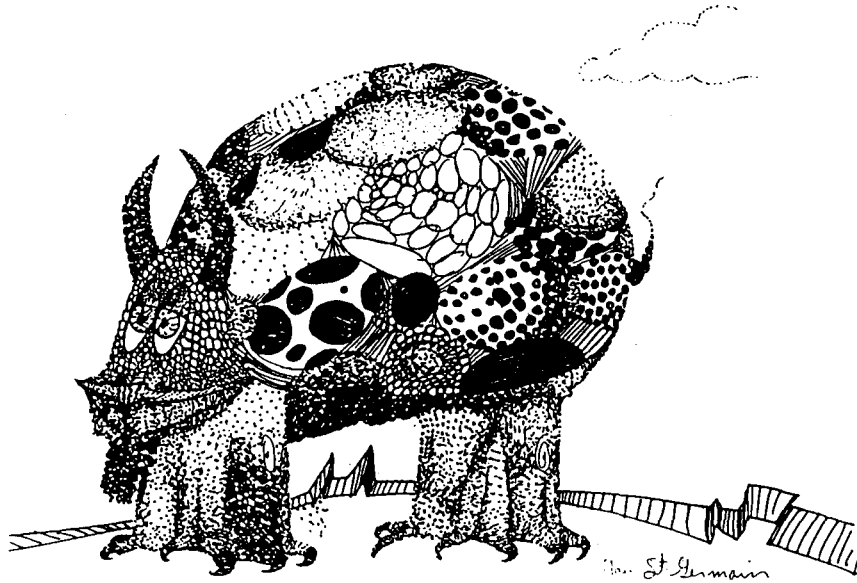
"What do you do all day?"

Here's what I might have said, given a little more time to think about the answer:

"For a long time, I cursed myself a thousand times a day because I couldn't work. My value as a person was my work. I threw everything into my career and when I could no longer work, it was like a death in the family. I went through denial, anger and bargaining. But in the end, I had to either accept the reality of my limitations or drive myself further into the ground with soul-destroying



Tom Ban



## What Do You Do All Day?

guilt and rage.

What do I do all day? I take care to be gentle with myself and live in the present, one day after another. I try hard neither to judge nor envy other people.

Whenever I start dwelling on my losses (relationships, friendships, career and money to name a few) I also try to count the positives. As a direct result of my struggles with major depression, I've met some of the most important people in my life; friends, therapists and even a priest who is both a close friend and my spiritual director. These are people whom I'd never have met without the illness.

I've come to believe that life is a spiritual journey in which we try to find out that which is true and real. My reality might not include a huge mortgage payment or a high stress job any longer, but in so many ways, I am a stronger person for having survived all that's happened.

What do I do all day?

I live."



photo by Brahm

Dan before he bought his elevator shoes

## Life on the Church Steps

by Sam Roddan

In spiritual lore, the church steps on Sundays, have always been a gathering place for the faithful. It is here worshippers press the flesh, get the latest news of sick and dying, the date and time for the next funeral, the when and where for the next Fowl Supper.

At First United, Gore and Hastings, my Dad, long-time preacher at this mission church, often confronted unruly drunks on the steps as they tried to make their way into the auditorium, sleep off a hangover, or steal a few Bibles to peddle on the street for a down payment on a tin of sterno. For Dad, the church steps were observation post, look-out, and sometimes pulpit.

Opposite the church steps, on Gore avenue, was the grey stone Empress Theater. On a Saturday night, a crowd of hopefuls, mostly down-and-outers, were always hanging around the stage door for a hand-out from the actors. From the church steps, Dad viewed the actors with suspicious and jaundiced eye.

"Those actors aren't for real," Dad would say. "When they go on stage they wear make-up, dress in fancy clothes, recite lines written by dreamers, fake their emotions and feelings. Here in our mission church we meet the real thing. Every life is a tragedy. No actors. No make-up. Lines spring

from broken spirits. Rags cover flesh and bones. When our kind rage and weep, their lines come from troubled and anguished hearts."

The church steps were rebuilt many times. The treads wore thin, dry rot got into the timbers. Empty sterno tins, lysol, and vanilla extract bottles were tossed under the risers. Much of the refuse was covered with a shroud of confetti and moldy rice that had fallen through the cracks.

The steps, always tested by anxious undertakers before their service, had borne the weight of many coffins, carried in and out of the church. And it was on these steps Dad had stood on that Sunday morning, June 23, 1946, when a great earthquake had rocked Vancouver. The congregation had rushed into the street. From the church steps, Dad had become preacher, observer, on-the-spot reporter.

"Don't panic!" Dad shouted. "The first tremors have passed. Our church stands like a Rock. We have lost but a few shingles. Praise be to God! But my friends, I have just received a message that the quake has knocked St. Peter from his pedestal at Holy Rosary on Dunsmuir. It was only a graven image, as you well know, but Thanks be to God, First Church stands firm as the Rock of Ages. In

celebration, let us all join together in singing that grand old hymn of Martin Luther: A Mighty Fortress is our God! A Bulwark never failing!"

Never! Never did a congregation of saints and sinners, reprobates, unregenerates, scoffers, free thinkers and pagans, backsliders derelicts and winos (all dearly loved by First Church) sing with such joyous abandon. It was as though their words, moved by the Spirit, were touched by fire and sword.

After the last Amen, Dad announced a silver collection would be taken up immediately to replace the shingles, and put a new roof over the sanctuary.

But "human nature being what it is" as Dad said later, never, never, never, did a congregation evaporate, dissolve, vanish and disappear as quickly as this one into the teeming bowels of the lanes, back-alley ways and rabbit warrens of his parish in Downtown Eastside, Vancouver.



## Healing

'I saw sorrow turning into clarity.'

Yoko Ono



## Pastoral Reflections by Rev. John Ballard

Have you ever felt extremely bitter over an injustice done to you? I'm sure most of us would have to answer yes to that question. How long did it take to get over it or are you over it yet? Some counsel from the good book says, "Beware, lest a root of bitterness spring up and thereby many be defiled." Who are the many? Well, often they are the family members and close friends who would like to tell you to let it go but like a broken record you keep going over it. Let me tell you a story.

A dear friend of mine, Margaret Powers wrote a poem back on Thanksgiving of 1964, the poem became extremely popular. Margaret made many copies for people who requested it. The poem began to spread throughout Canada and then around the world. Somehow Margaret Power's name got lost. Those who knew Margaret had written it urged her to claim her authorship. Due to some unfortunate circumstances her handwritten versions of "The Dream" as she called it were lost. Seeking to prove her authorship, she took it to a copyright lawyer. Before long it became an all consuming pastime to prove her authorship. Enter bitterness! It took Margie's daughter, Paula, to confront her mother about her growing bitterness. A dear friend Geoffrey Still of Focus on the Fam-

ily counselled her to leave it in God's hand and get on with the children's ministry God had given her and her husband, Paul. Margaret struggled with it but finally turned it over to God. Enter burial! Jesus taught us, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abides alone." However, in God's burial plot there is forever a hope. Enter resurrection! On the Orthodox Good Friday, April 16th, 1993, on the front page of the Vancouver Sun, Margaret was finally given

the long overdue credit for her poem. You can read the story of her romance and how she came to write this masterpiece in her newly released book, "Footprints".

Sometime back, Margaret gave me permission to publish her poem, Footprints on the Kitsilano Bible Church brochure with the addition of her name. "Footprints" is no longer anonymous. It was written by Margaret Fishback Powers of Coquitlam B.C.

End of story or perhaps only the beginning. Maybe, you find you've become embittered by life, then Margaret's poem may be just the prescription the Great Physician recommends for you:

## Footprints by Margaret Fishback Powers

*One night a man had a dream  
He was walking along the beach with the Lord  
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from his life.  
In each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints  
in the sand; one made by him, and the other  
by the Lord.*

*When the last scene of his life flashed before  
him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand.  
He noticed that many times along the path of his  
life, there was only one set of footprints.  
He also noticed that it happened  
at the worst times in his life.*

*This bothered him very much,  
so he asked the Lord about it.  
"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,  
you'd walk with me all the way.  
But I've noticed that during times of trouble,  
there is only one set of footprints.  
I don't understand why you left me  
when I needed you most."*

*The Lord answered, "My precious child,  
I love you and I would never leave  
you.  
During the times of trial,  
when you see only one set of  
footprints,  
that's when I was carrying you."*



### Bulletin Board

#### Scholarship Fund

In memory of Sheri Mescaniuk, a Scholarship fund in her name will be set up at U.B.C. for students in psychiatry and/or psychiatric care. More information available from the family or MPA.

#### 'The Crackwalker'

The Crackwalker is a play which takes an intimate look at two couples, people who have fallen between the cracks.

The language is strong and direct; the language of the streets. It is painful and funny, sad and joyous.

Come to the Firehall Arts Centre, 280 E. Cordova for a free matinee performance for the homeless and mentally challenged. Come, if you like, with a group from Carnegie, MPA, etc.

Friday, July 2 at 2:00 pm Matinee

or phone Jennifer at 224-6200

or Firehall at 689-0926

#### FREE BUS SERVICE

Every Wednesday Pick Up/Drop Off between 10am-11am and again between 3pm-4pm.

MPA - Portland Hotel - Hampton Hotel - LivingRoom - Lookout - Kettle - Coast - MPA.

'Get on and off where you want.' (Agencies Activities Provided)

#### FREEBIES

For those in need: Free clothing; Furniture; Dishes

Choose from a variety of donations

1624 West 3rd Ave., Monday to Friday, 1pm to 3:30pm.



