

MOTHER— DEGREES OF HALLUCINATION (*Wagon Wheels and Special “Dog”*)

By the time I was five we had moved a house by house-movers from a few miles away to the farm that occupied one corner of the Houserville four corners. It was the first time known that a Wood had moved a house in to move into. We occupied it in 1939, the year I was allowed to register and attend school at age 5 because turning 6 in that school year. One side and one end of the schoolyard were adjacent to our farm. We skirted the proverbial long country walk to the country school by simply walking about 300 feet through the garden and orchard and stepping into the township educational plant. It might have made us look privileged.

That school-plot—made available to the public by the property owner—when the school closed for good, including the building, would be moved back, i.e., reclaimed, when inherited by Pa’s only sibling and sister. Bernice and her husband Levi would lift and rotate the building 90 degrees resetting it on a new foundation—with the aid of jacks of course. They then converted it into a house.

Although I have reviewed no plot abstract, the understanding is that part of Henrietta’s property, located one-half mile south in the center of the mile was once where the original school building was located. It was reportedly located on the exact site of Henrietta’s home. Aunt Bernice, while staying there for a few days, was forewarned by Pa that she should not be alarmed if noises like school children playing would be heard. My cousin reported that indeed the noises were heard. My cousin Phyllis Bigelow, author of “The Rugged Road To Recovery, Post Depression Era” a book in process, says:

When mom went to stay in the house to protect antiques as he [Pa] was to be gone overnight...he warned her she might hear children playing on or near a stairway where a school once stood. Mom heard them as he said... (Email dated Feb. 4, 2009)

The main reason for including this quote is that my cousin’s comment shows the connection between the landowners and the local interest and involvement in education as it relates to my father’s experience with the separation of church and state.



Before flu

During the time we lived in this mega-moved house, when I was around 7, there was a flu epidemic and it affected the whole family—except Ramona. I was especially sick. The sheets had to be changed frequently because soiled from top to bottom. I had a very high fever and hallucinated, and though there may be some professional differences on the meaning of that word, please bear with me and tolerate the use of this anecdote.

A very large wagon wheel of the wood-spoke type came toward me on a good roll. It was as high as a two-story building. It came toward me from the front and from the left. I physically shifted to the right on the bed to avoid the wheel, but it grazed my head as it went by. I would turn and watch it go off behind me and disappear, only to roll back around and reappear in the same radius route to come again.

Responding to my terror Ma was soon at the bedside to my right, at which time the wheel, like before, appeared and the same thing was experienced, only by now Ma had assured me that it was



After

not real. By the time the wheel came around again what was real was now seen from the reassuring perspective that it was unreal, and the alarm diminished with the motherly application of a cold washcloth to my forehead.

The importance of Mother, though a burdened mother, in that home at the right time is very significant to me. Obviously, the left side of my brain was being cooked, and soon after that the loss of some vision in my right eye was discovered. I needed to understand and explain to myself the wagon-wheel phenomenon, the visual traveling-phenomena in that space toward me, and the timing of my movements that were timed to avoid being hit. There was no audio aspect remembered but there was a unique taste, and to this day when the taste comes so does the memory of that giant wagon wheel. Though there is no effort to recall the event, when the taste comes so does the wagon wheel experience. It's a nasal taste perhaps due to vomiting.

The importance of the physical layout of the house is involved. Lying in my bedroom I could look out those sash-framed windowpanes directly across to the home and beyond the home into the field where I supposed "Dog" had met his...wagon wheel—a wheel several times his height. The alignment of that constellation of mental images amounts to the terms with which I have come regarding the wagon wheel; the connection not only makes sense but also gives emotional comfort as well as some rational satisfaction. Ma's calm and rational reassurance was all that was needed to assist in maintaining contact with reality (See An Exercise, p. 211 re: illusion and delusion too).



Part of orchard

The information above was not presented to draw attention to me, so let's return to Pa's description of "Dog's" after-death appearance at his side and in the orchard and then running ahead and disappearing. Pa suffered a lot from sinusitis and that's a medical fact. He was alone in the orchard, and no one to give assurance that what he saw was not real, and so he told it thenceforth as a real experience. Well, it was a real experience, as everything is real in some sense. This analysis is not meant to shrink boundless ignorance into a simple laboratory test-tube of the mind. For, anyone familiar

with the nanosecond-like speeds involved in the worldwide computer network system, it is quite conceivable that there's a dimension more extraterrestrial than earth bound thinking. The complications and the availability of the Internet's information highway opens the windows of heaven to unimaginable possibilities. It is not stretching the imagination nor reality-thinking too far to suppose there are other dimensional programs that make some individuals special whether in locating subterranean water streams or being fine-tuned or especially tuned in other ways.

Audio hallucinations are also possible in varying degrees of reality, but involve mistakes in judgment due to disease. During my work as a clinician, the Medical Director came into my office and asked me if I wanted to see a classical Korsakoff psychosis. Entering the room where the patient was I entered into the patient's world of ideas and became his dear friend "Jim". As he was responding to my presence he heard me speaking as his friend "Jim" though I had said nothing. He was having visual and audio hallucinations. He fit me into and made me relative to those mental bits.

At least alcoholism had played a big part in this terminal patient's past, but one could wonder about it though assured too that mother and home didn't have a good hand in it—so to speak. The actual and remedial (corrective results) value of mother and home is depicted well in the hallway of a skid row mission I visited in Chicago. On the wall hung a simple painting of a mother, alone, but obviously praying for the likes of her

wayward child. It was a picture of a mother's prayer being answered through the Mission's availability on skid row as the down-and-outer sought refuge.



One more speculative comment: there may be fevers of the soul beyond the reach of mother and home that affect potentially beautiful and ugly minds that for some guilt-reasoning take on special forms of creativity. Ma began handling her discomforts by keeping busy. When too ill to do normal motherly activity, she became creative in other ways. The home was soon to display images that were indicative of her needs. The product of her efforts to maintain function and balance soon

appeared. The first to appear on the home scene was an "angel"—a clean cherub carved from a bar of soap. I can still see her lying on the divan working on that angel. It thenceforth hung near the top of our Christmas trees. Now in retrospect it can be seen as an iconic symbol and can vaguely appear on the beginning end of the hallucination spectrum.