

Biographical Studies of Suicide, 2001, Volume 7**JERZY FELIKS URMAN****David Lester**

Jerzy was born on April 9, 1932, in the East Galician town of Stanislawow at a time when it was under Polish rule.¹ When he was born, Jews accounted for 40 percent of the population of the town of 50,000, and there were 55 synagogues in the town. The language of Jerzy's home was Polish, but Yiddish was spoken also and Hebrew studied.

Jerzy's paternal grandfather was headmaster of a school, and his father was a doctor (after studies at the universities in Vienna and L'wow). His uncle Emil was on the Faculty of Law at L'wow, and another was a petroleum engineer. His maternal grandparents had already emigrated to Palestine (in 1930). Other relatives had emigrated to America.

The Russians occupied the region in September, 1939, but the Germans took over after the Germans declared war on the Russians in June, 1941. The "final solution" was carried out not only by the Germans, but also enthusiastically by the local Ukrainian nationalists. Nearly 1,000 intellectuals and professionals were murdered in Stanislawow on August 3, 1941; 10,000 more on the night of October 12. The ghetto was established on December 15. Eventually most of the Jews were sent to the concentration camps, and the remaining Jews were murdered early in 1943. After living in the town since 1662, Jews were totally eliminated in 1943.

Jerzy was precocious. Among his projects was one for growing mushrooms in hothouses in Palestine, and he had other schemes for saving the Jewish people. His mother described Jerzy as beautiful, cheerful and intelligent. He was always top of his class at school and helpful to his friends.

In the summer of 1942, Jerzy came home and told his family that he had seen Germans gouge the eyes of a little boy with red hot wire. The eyes were dangling on a string, he told his father. The family discussed the possibility of leaving the ghetto, and Jerzy's father obtained cyanide for the family, who agreed that they would die together rather than being tortured and deported. Jerzy was especially afraid that he might betray friends.

In October, 1942, Jerzy's father arranged with his brother, Artur, to hide the family in Drohobycz, nearby. Jerzy went first; his mother, Sophie, in November. Sophie could pass as a Polish Catholic, and Artur obtained a fake ID for her so she could move freely about in the town. The Germans searched the house where they were hiding (with

¹ It is now part of the Ukraine.

a Mrs. Huczynska) but missed finding them. Scared, Mrs. Huczynska asked them to leave. After a night wandering through the town, they came back, and Mrs. Huczynska allowed them back. Jerzy's father, Izydor, arrived in December. By March, 1943, his uncle Emil and paternal grandmother had joined them, and they now were hiding in the apartment of Artur's former housekeeper, Hela, whom they paid for hiding them.

Jerzy's only friend was a stray cat. Jerzy was quiet, read a lot and wrote a great deal. He left a brief diary which Rudolf (1991) has published, along with a commentary detailing Jerzy's brief life. The family members could not go out, except for Sophie, and could not make any noise by moving or speaking. They did listen to the radio news and read newspapers.

There were two other women in a neighboring apartment. Perhaps they betrayed the Urmans? After a year in hiding, the police came on November 13, 1943, accusing the Urmans of being Jews. They denied it. The police searched for money and jewels. One of them hit Izydor with his pistol, and he fell down. Jerzy then swallowed his poison and fell to the floor. His last words to his mother were "Mummy, I took the cyanide." The police were shocked and left, taking the family's clothes, food and blankets. Sophie ran to find a doctor, but it was too late to save Jerzy.

His parents buried Jerzy at night in a shed at the back of the apartment building, digging the frozen ground with knives and spoons. Two weeks later, the Germans returned and robbed the family again, but permitted the family to stay. The police said that the war was coming to an end, and they left the family to their fate.

Eventually, the Russians defeated the Germans and took over the region once more, which now became part of the Ukraine. The family dug up Jerzy and buried him in August, 1944, in the Jewish cemetery. Soon after the war, Jerzy's parents had a daughter, and the family eventually emigrated to Israel.

Jerzy was eleven and a half when he died. By his suicide, he shocked the German police so that they left the family alone, thereby saving his parents.

Reference

Rudolf, A. (Ed.) *I'm not even a grown-up*. London: Menard Press, 1991.

ADRIAEN JANSE VAN ILPENDAM

David Lester

In the 17th Century, Adriaen Janse van Ilpendam was the only person to commit suicide in Albany, New York. He committed suicide on March 12, 1686. Merwick (1999) used his life to write a microhistory of the Dutch in New York State before and after the English took over. Only a little is known about Adriaen Janse, and this is what we know.

His Father

In 1616, Jan Janse was a young man, 22 years of age, living in Delft. He received permission to marry Judith Hame Adriaensdr. Jan Janse supported himself as a hatmaker. Adriaen Janse was born in 1618, their only child, named after Judith's father. Two and a half years later, Judith died, leaving 400 guilders to take care of the orphan. His father signed a paper agreeing to take care of the child until he was 25 or married.

Jan Janse, then 32, married Cathalina van Straseel and moved to Leiden where his relatives lived. Two years later, Jan Janse started working on ships, joined the West India Company, and set out in 1636 with van Rensselaer for America. By 1646, Jan Janse was bankrupt, but before he could be punished, he and his wife died on Manhattan Island in 1647.

Adriaen Janse was now 30, and he too was in New Amsterdam (in America) as a schoolmaster. Nothing is known about the path he took to arrive here. He had to refuse all association with his father in order to avoid his creditors.

Adriaen Janse

Adriaen Janse had a wife, Tryntje Jans, but they had no children. He worked for a local trader on Manhattan Island, a place with about 120 households, probably as a bookkeeper, and also as a schoolmaster, running a private school, living on the fees the parents paid him. He signed his name as Adriaen van Ilpendam to avoid connection with his deceased bankrupt father.

In 1650, the town of Rensselaerswijck, forty miles upriver, decided to have a proper school, and they hired Adriaen Janse to run it for them. He rented a house, but two years later he owned land and had moved to Beverwijck, later known as Albany, still working as a schoolmaster.

Albany was a town of some 120 households with 50 more families on outlying farms. The major trade was in animal pelts and grain which were shipped down the Hudson to New York City. There were French to the north and natives all around. Life was full of potential danger.

Janse did not appear to be rich. He was sued in 1653 by two men, a merchant who claimed he is owed for goods and a doctor who treated Janse's wife in Manhattan. He was unable to pave the road in front of his house as required, but the court excused him.

In 1657, Janse sold the land he owned and bought a brickyard and a smaller lot with a house. But in 1664, the English took over Beverwijck and occupied the town, now called Albany, for nine years. In 1668 Janse decided to return to the Netherlands to deal with his affairs there, leaving his wife with power of attorney, and he returned in May, 1669.

Janse apparently trained to be a notary, and in June 1669 Janse applied to become a public notary in Albany. He has just turned 51. Janse continues to work as a schoolmaster, and he supplements his income from his work as a notary, teaching night school, some trading, and his brickyard. He also sometimes obtained official work. In 1671, he was hired to make a list of all men and to collect fines if they did not report for military duty, some part of which he could keep. He was given a special seat in the church to honor his contribution to the community as a low-level civil servant, and he became a church master, overseeing repairs to the church. In 1673, the Dutch rebelled against the English, but the English re-established their rule in 1674.

In 1675, Adriaen Janse received two bequests in the Netherlands, each of a 1,000 guilders. Obtaining these bequests, or exchanging the income each year for materials and goods he needed in America, became a wearisome task for him. His inheritance did not amount to much in reality.

As the years went by, Janse earned less and less as a notary. People had little money, and new ways were developing. Courts were becoming important, and "attorneys" becoming more common. The problem of having to use the English language and English practices also presented problems for the older Dutch residents. Janse, himself, had difficulty spelling the English words. On one document he described himself as "Note Republic."

By 1682, Janse was anxious and depressed about his survival. His wife died in 1683, and he found it hard to get word from the Netherlands about the income from his bequests. His letters expressed a sense of helplessness.

He hung himself in March, 1686, roughly 68 years old. He left no suicide note, and there was no record of where he hung himself or why. There was no record of who buried him or where. No one paid for a pall to cover his coffin. On July 29 of that year, the English governor and his council agree that a cousin could dispose of Janse's property.

Reference

Merwick, D. *Death of a notary*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1999.

NICK TRAINA

David Lester

I must apologize. My dislike of Danielle Steel is clear in this essay. I have never met her, nor read her books. I admit that her son, Nick, may well have killed himself whatever Steel may have done for him during his nineteen years. What annoyed me was the tone of the book, the complete absence of consideration of the role that she may have played in his life course.

I dislike the medical model of human behavior, the assumption that all of our behavior can be put accounted for by genes and neurophysiology. If that is so, then our life experiences are unimportant. Therefore, we could abuse our children, sexually molest them, whatever, and it would have no impact because the genes determine everything. The stupidity of this conclusion makes it clear that genetic factors play only a role in determining our behavior and that our experiences play an important role.

As someone who believes in the psychodynamic explanations of human behavior, Steel's attribution of Nick's suicide to a genetically-caused bipolar affective disorder and attention-deficit disorder, passed on presumably through his biological father's genes, offends me.

Nick's Story

Danielle Steel was twice a divorced woman when she met Bill and got pregnant by him (probably in 1978). They had no intention of being married, but they did marry so as to legitimize the child. When Steel was six months into the pregnancy, Bill moved in, but he went back to drugs and was barely around the home. Nick was born in May, 1978.

During Nick's birth, a labor that lasted twelve hours, the baby became stuck in the birth canal, and Steel had to have a cesarean section. Bill disappeared soon after the birth, leaving Steel and her daughter, Beatrix, nine years old, to raise Nick. As an infant and toddler, Nick was healthy and happy. The only problem was his adverse reactions to medications -- Dramamine made him hyperactive, while coffee put him to sleep. But several problems quickly appeared.

First he was voracious. Steel had to feed him a lot, and this continued all his life, although he was fat only as a baby.² Eventually, his high activity level "burned off" the calories. Steel and her housekeeper spoke to him in Spanish, Beatrix in English, and Nick was soon bilingual. He took his first steps and spoke his first words at 8 months, and could talk in sentences at one year. He soon developed strong opinions, about such things as clothes, activities and favorite music, and Steel describes him as precocious. However,

² Suggesting strong unresolved oral needs.

he still wet the bed at two-and-a-half, and he very stubborn and belligerent at this time. Other parents might have seen such a child as gifted.

Nick did not sleep a lot and made it clear he wanted to sleep with his mother. Steel says that she lost the battle. She would put him to sleep in his room, but he would get into her bed once he was asleep. And Steel did not really mind:

I loved having him with me. I loved being with him, and near him, and cuddling him, blowing raspberries on his stomach, and feeling the silk of his blond bowl cut on my cheek. (p. 18)

At first, Steel's dating and love life was nonexistent. Tom Traina came into her life when Nick was two, and Steel and he were engaged after six weeks of dating.³ Before the honeymoon, Nick came into their bedroom and said "Mr. Twaina, what you don't understand is that I want her to myself" (p. 34). Steel was quickly pregnant, and Nick's father came back to request visitation rights. He visited a few times and then disappeared again. Nick also was furious about the baby (born just after Nick turned 4) and persecuted her, Samantha, for the first twelve years of her life.⁴

Steel lost the next baby after two-and-a-half months of pregnancy, but then soon got pregnant with Victoria. Nick's father surfaced again. Nick began wetting the bed and defecating in the bath. The visits with his father upset him, both when they happened but also when Bill failed to show. Nick would feel that he had done something to upset Bill. Soon, these visits stopped.

Victoria arrived when Nick was five-and-a-half. Nick has an asthma attack that night (not his first), but so severe he had to be rushed to the hospital. Nick ignored Victoria, focusing his hatred on Samantha. Vanessa arrived when Nick was six-and-a-half, Maxx when he was eight-and-a-half and Zara when he was eleven.

When Nick was seven, Steel and Tom went to court to terminate Bill's rights, and Tom adopted Nick. Nick said he did not want the younger children to know he was not Tom's son, and Steel and Tom agreed to this!

Although the bed-wetting stopped when Nick was six, and his behavior at school was fine, he was destructive with his toys, still stubborn and oppositional, liked to play war and draw black and bloody drawings, and was rough with his siblings, although he "never physically attacked or injured them" (p. 47). He was on the honor roll at school, and his intelligence test score was very high.

At eleven, skateboarding was his hobby and music became his passion. But he was self-centered, uninterested in other people's needs or problems. He also gave up sports, at which he had been quite good. Steel had worried about him from birth on, but

³ Tom had two older children, Trevor 12 and Todd 11 to go with Beatrix who was now 13.

⁴ After which, according to Steel, they adored each other.

now she became very worried. She says that she had no idea of what was wrong with Nick.⁵ She did not even discuss her concerns with her husband. She did notice that the Tylenol was disappearing and realized that Nick was "self-medicating." Nick then turned to Sudafed once Steel locked up the Tylenol. Steel had Nick see her therapist, but the therapist did not see anything direly wrong with Nick.

Decline

In seventh grade, Nick began to be a problem at school, and Steel was often called by the administrators. The school recommended a therapist who focused on the family, an orientation that Steel did not welcome. Nick began to use drugs -- alcohol, marihuana and LSD -- although Steel found out about this only when reading Nick's diaries after his suicide. Nick also became sexually active which Steel knew about, and she authorized the pharmacist to sell Nick condoms.

Toward the end of the school, one of his best friends, Sarah, was killed while crossing a highway. The loss devastated Nick, and he never got over it -- he continued to refer to Sarah in his diaries for the rest of his life.

In summers, Steel would put Nick in camps, but he hated them. He was bored staying at their summer home in the Napa Valley, but he liked the holidays in Hawaii. There, he drank, smoked marihuana and picked up women, for as a teenager he appeared to be much older.

In eighth grade, Nick remained sad over the loss of Sarah, and he continued to see the therapist. His behavior at school was still a problem and he was often on probation and threatened with expulsion. He began to stay in his room a lot, and he wrote about his depression in his diary -- he even wondered whether he was manic-depressive.

Meanwhile, Steel was becoming famous, and the tabloids began to pry into her life. The details were published -- her first marriage, her second to man who was later convicted of rape, and her marriage to Bill and Nick's birth. Bill appeared on television, and Nick wrote him and apparently contacted him.

The school expelled Nick two weeks before graduation. After much bargaining, they let him study at home and receive his diploma, but they would not let him attend graduation. After this, the high schools that had accepted Nick withdrew their offers, except one boarding school which allowed him to enrol. Nick was now fourteen.

After ten days of the new school year, the school called Steel and told her to pick him up. A counselor whom Steel had found told them that no school would take Nick. Steel put him in a wilderness program for a few weeks without warning him, she says, because she was advised not to. The man from the program arrived at 6 a.m. to pick up

⁵ And she made little effort to find out, for example, by taking a course on abnormal psychology or buying a textbook.

Nick. During this time, a doctor whom Steel knew found a small boarding school for disturbed kids

While Nick was at the wilderness program, Steel wrote him a letter

Sweet darling Nicky, The words tumble all over my head, my heart, my tongue...I am dying to see you!!! A thousand million bzillion times I've thought all kinds of thoughts and messages, and silly things to you, since you've been gone.....I love you. I love you so much. Oh how I have missed you!!!! I have been in your room a thousand times a day...(p. 87)

Other parts of the letter were more motherly, but the letter is not the kind of letter than mothers write sons. It is more the kind of letter lovers write each other.

Unfortunately, the new school proved to be bad, and so she withdrew him after five days. Steel found Nick a new psychiatrist and a school in a neighboring county. Steel also took him to a local drug program where they met a counselor named Julie who they both liked very much. Gradually Julie became more and more involved with Nick and Steel, eventually becoming his second "mother."

Nick continued to stay in his room a lot, and Steel later found out that he was using marihuana, LSD, ecstasy and speed. However, the psychiatrist saw Nick as a bright spoiled boy having problems with adolescence. Steel's own therapist suggested that Nick was mentally ill, schizophrenic or manic-depressive. Steel says that this news shocked her! Nick knew he was disturbed, and Steel seems to have suspected it all along. Why was she surprised? And surely her therapist at this time could have suggested an appropriate referral? Instead, Julie, an untrained counselor, started coming to Steel's home every day to see Nick. Steel tried behavioral contracts with Nick, but he could not keep them. At the end of the school year, Nick's school insisted he receive psychiatric treatment before being allowed to return for the next year. Nick was now fifteen.

Julie found a psychiatric hospital in another state for Nick, and Nick's psychiatrist approved of the place. Nick was difficult to control there, and he decided he hated his family and was never coming home. The hospital suggested that he make himself a ward of the court. Steel got a lawyer, and the hospital agreed to let Nick come home. So after two weeks, Julie went with a bodyguard to pick Nick up.

Two things stand out here. First, Steel did not go -- she sent Julie to collect Nick. Second, Nick became angry at his family. Rather than seeing this as a possibly appropriate development and therapeutic progress, it is seen as a sign that the hospital is not good for Nick. How could Nick be angry at his family?

However, Steel did not want Nick at home. She could not find a psychiatric hospital for him, so she turned again to drug programs, despite knowing that they were not suitable. She put him in another residential drug treatment program, and again she

pulled him out. Back at the summer home in Napa, Nick was depressed. Nick's psychiatrist suggested a complete psychological evaluation before prescribing any medication, so Steel took him to a psychologist. The psychologist needed several sessions, and after the first suggested that Nick was manic-depressive. He then went away for a month before returning to complete the evaluation, and then took two weeks to write his report. Remember, this is California in the 1990s, and yet Steel, by now extremely wealthy, can find only incompetent mental health professionals!

Nick refused to go back to the psychiatrist, but agreed to see the psychologist who had decided that Nick had attention-deficit disorder and atypical manic-depressive disorder. "They" put him on Prozac.⁶ Nick improved a little, but was still clearly depressed.

At this time, a biography was coming out on Steel with details of Nick's adoption. Nick was upset about this since his half-siblings still had not been told the truth. Steel went to court, but lost. Nick's behavior at school continued to be poor -- he still showed little impulse control, and the school expelled him at Thanksgiving, after just one year.

They found a new school, luckily, and Julie visited Nick every day. Julie (again) explored mental hospitals which might be suitable for Nick. They thought of a "famous" one in Kansas (could it be the Menninger Clinic?), but decided that it was too far away. Julie even spent three months touring the country trying to find resources, finally finding one not too far away. They sent Nick there in February for a week, and they found no evidence of manic-depressive disorder or attention-deficit disorder, although they agree he was quite disturbed. Julie had also found a new psychiatrist for Nick.

At fifteen, Steel described Nick as being unable to do things -- he could not close the refrigerator door, feed his pet, make his bed, flush the toilet. He also lacked awareness and had poor impulse control. She could not take him traveling with the family any more. He could not cope with stimulation and confusion.

The new psychiatrist, who remained Nick's therapist until his suicide, diagnosed manic-depressive disorder, attention-deficit disorder and suspected neurological damage. Lithium is the preferred medication, but can cause kidney damage. So Dr. Seifried prescribed Prozac again. Nick seemed to improve.

That Spring, Steel hired attendants for Nick, and after many had stayed for a while found two who stayed with Nick until his suicide. They left him alone to sleep at night but took it in turns to accompany him for the rest of the day. Nick also sometimes attended twelve-step programs in order to stay away from drugs. Steel also had Nick take daily urine samples, and Nick managed to stay drug free, most of the time.

⁶ Steel seems to confuse psychologists and psychiatrists, using the terms interchangeably for the same person. Obviously, the psychologist could not prescribe Prozac.

That summer (1994, when Nick was sixteen), Steel took the family to France, leaving Nick in a camp. He called upset saying that they would not let him have his medication and that he wanted to come home. He walked out, and Julie had to rescue him. Julie and the housekeeper found him in a motel (from where he had called Steel), having ordered 480 dollars of pizza. Julie took Nick to the hospital which had evaluated him in February until Steel could get back.

The hospital recommended long-term residential treatment, but Nick was miserable about the idea. The staff seemed to have given him Thorazine and put him in a quiet room to sleep for much of the time. Steel took him out after 39 days.

He went to join the family in Napa, but soon got bored. He had also started a band, Link 80, for which he sang and wrote songs, and he played with them that summer. He visited Julie but ran away. Nick's psychiatrist recommended a small hospital in the East Bay and, resentfully, Nick went there. Meanwhile, Steel notes that her marriage to Tom was falling apart, a not surprising turn of events.

Julie had a husband and two children, Serena eight and Chris four. Julie and her husband offered to let Nick stay with them, and Steel agreed. Thereafter, Steel and Julie became "tag-team" mothers for Nick. He stayed with both, and they consulted continually about him. Eventually, Julie and her husband moved to a house with a separate cottage so that Nick could stay in the cottage or in Julie's house.

Steel says that she regrets agreeing to this, even though Nick was happy there. It really begins to seem that anything which might work for Nick upsets Steel, but she does not want Nick at home and she does not want to have to handle the problem herself. Julie finds programs for Nick. Julie picks him up when he can't stand the programs. To be sure, Steel has five younger children and a busy career as a writer. But in that case, why hang on to Nick. Steel appears to be in great conflict, very ambivalent about Nick. She loves him, but cannot tolerate him. She wants him helped, but cannot find a suitable place for him. She frets, but will not simplify her life so that she can deal with Nick and his problems herself. Yet she also claims she tried everything. It really does appear that the famous place in Kansas could not have been worse than what Steel managed to concoct.

Soon after Nick moved in with Julie's family, Steel found a doctor at UCLA who specialized in manic-depression. After an evaluation, Nick was put on lithium in November, along with Prozac. Nick threatened suicide the day he was given the prescription, but he eventually calmed down and began taking lithium and submitting to the regular blood tests to check the levels in his system. Three weeks later, Nick was vastly improved, and he continued to take lithium for two years. Soon after beginning lithium, Nick managed to visit his father, Bill, unbeknownst to Steel.

During this period, Nick tried to attend high school, but was allowed to study independently for the last few weeks. He then tried junior college, but quickly dropped

out. Instead, he devoted himself to his band Link 80. He wrote lyrics, rehearsed, performed, and managed the band, handling bookings, ordering merchandize, etc. The first single came out when Nick was seventeen, and a CD when he was eighteen. This from a teenager who supposedly could not remember to flush the toilet!

Meanwhile, Steel's marriage broke up in 1995 when Nick was seventeen. Nick had trouble coping with this and was hospitalized for two weeks. Nick still had two attendants to guard him, Julie to monitor him, visits with his psychiatrist and his medications. However, after he turned 18, he threatened to move out of Julie's, and in September he stopped taking his lithium. As an adult, posing no threat to others, there was nothing Steel or others could do to force him to take lithium.

Meanwhile Steel had a new lover, Tom, and they went off to Los Angeles for a weekend. On the Monday morning, Julie found Nick overdosed on heroin and other drugs. He stayed in the trauma unit for eight days, and his mind and most bodily functions recovered. There was some liver dysfunction, and his legs were partially numb. Nick was transferred to a psychiatric ward at another hospital where he tried suicide again with drugs his friends had brought him. This stress caused Tom to leave Steel, although he returned at Thanksgiving.

Nick started taking the lithium again, and now Steel could suspend his rights if he stopped because he was a danger to himself. However, by Christmas, Nick was immersed with his band again, and they went on a short tour to Los Angeles. After their return, Nick overdosed again at Julie's house. Steel threatened Nick -- if he missed one lithium pill in the future, she would hospitalize him.

That summer, Nick seemed fine. He went to Hawaii with the family. They tested his lithium levels weekly, and he went to twelve-step meetings to stay off drugs. Beatrix got married in May, 1997, and then Steel and Tom took the kids to Europe for six weeks. Nick went on a long tour with the band.

The End

The tour was a disaster. The van had to hold their equipment and nine guys, touring is tiring, and friction grew between the band members. Nick had not told the band members about his manic-depression (more truth-hiding), and when they criticized him he quit. Julie flew out and patched things up for while. But Nick realized that touring was too stressful him. He would never be able to tour Europe or Japan. This realization depressed him, for if he could not tour, he could not play and so he could not live. One night Nick drank and smoked marihuana, the band members told the attendant, and Nick came home. The band had toured for nine and a half weeks, and had two weeks left. Julie miscarried after flying home.

Back home, Nick went to bed for three weeks. He threatened to move out of Julie's again, and in August tried to start a new band. after one month, "Knowledge"

played a concert and started taping a new CD. By mid-September, the band had bookings.

Steel was supposed to have lunch with Nick on September 19, but he cancelled because he had a date. That night he killed himself with morphine.

Discussion

Biographies by mothers or fathers about the suicides of their children are difficult to use for insights into suicide. Too often, the information is incomplete and severely prejudiced by the parent's need to deny responsibility. This is especially true for Steel's biography of her son.

In her view, Nick had defective genes which caused manic-depressive illness and attention-deficit disorder. Since her side of the family is psychiatrically healthy, it must have been the genes passed on to Nick by his father Bill, especially since Nick was the only child she had who was fathered by Bill.⁷ The other six children, with different biological fathers, all are normal.

On the other hand, anyone with a psychodynamic leaning would note:

- a difficult birth
- no father present to act as a role model
- episodic visits from drug-addicted father
- spoiled by two older females (mother and older sister), with no effort to teach him impulse control
- allowed to sleep with mother as child
- excessively close relationship with mother, in which he is promoted to "lover" and confidante
- mother collaborates with him to hide the "truth"
- loss by death of one of his best friends
- possible extreme anger toward those close to him, suppressed or repressed toward mother and step-father, but not at first to sister who "dethroned" him until he is able later to repress his anger toward her too

There is much omitted from Steel's account of her son's life. There is no information about the man she married who later adopted Nick. There is nothing about herself, except that she does imply that she was in psychotherapy for most of the time Nick was alive, although we do not know what problems she discussed with her therapist.⁸ Her marriage breaks up when Nick is 17, but she gives us no details of what the problems were in the marriage and how these problems might have impacted Nick and the other children. We learn nothing about the other children. We are led to assume that they are all psychologically healthy and have no problems, but that seems very unlikely.

⁷ Steel admits that there is no evidence of mental illness in Bill's family aside from his own drug-addiction.

⁸ Interestingly, the students in my class on "Abnormal Psychology" commented that they thought it would be most traumatic to have Danielle Steel as a mother.

Of the three previous biographies by parents of sons who killed themselves (all reviewed in previous issues of these pages), only one (Susan White-Bowden) accepted any responsibility for her child's suicide.

It is a puzzle why this mother, who seems to be enormously wealthy from the description of her life style, could not find adequate help for her son. Nick lived in California in the 1980s and 1990s, not North Dakota in the 1930s. Her account would have us believe that there were no good facilities for disturbed adolescents and no good mental health professionals to recognize his disturbance.

Steel had one older child, five younger children and two step-children. She also lists 44 books published, mostly written during Nick's lifetime one supposes.⁹ This woman was very busy. She had a housekeeper, eventually hired two full-time assistants to watch over Nick, and recruited another married women with children to act as a "tag-team" mother. Perhaps Steel could have cut back on her work and on her child-bearing to devote a little more time to Nick herself. We read that his other "mother," Julie, although not trained in dealing with disturbed adolescents (her only training was in drug-abusing adolescents) did much of the work locating facilities and therapists for Nick, not Steel. On several occasions, Steel parks Nick in some residential facility and then departs, only to find out days or weeks later that the facility did not fit Nick's needs. On several of these occasions, it is not Steel, but others who have to drop everything and "rescue" Nick from the facility.

Of course, Steel could have behaved differently, completely differently, and Nick may still have killed himself sooner or later. This is not the issue here. The issue is that Steel shows little or no self-insight into the role she played in Nick's life and death, given that he may have had a genetic predisposition to manic-depressive disorder.

After all, Kay Jamison has a manic-depressive disorder, but she has become a leading psychiatrist in the field rather than a suicide. Being humans, and not lower animals, our genes do not completely determine our behavior.

Reference

Steel, D. *His bright light*. New York: Delacort, 1998.

⁹ Steel says that only two books had been published prior to Nick's birth.

JEAN LOTT

David Lester

Tim Lott's mother Jean killed herself on a Monday, early in March 1988 in Southall, England. Her son Tim has written a biography, not simply of her, but of the whole family, focusing of course on himself. Tim was born in England some ten years after me, and so his reminiscences struck a particular chord in me, although they gave no great insights into his mother's suicide.

Both Jean's and her husband Jack Lott's parents were upper working class, not lower middle class, an important distinction in England. The upper working class did not aspire to be better; they were content to be working class. Jack was born on January 27, 1926. His father co-owned a grocery store, Wells and Lotts, near Crystal Palace. Jack was offered a place at the local grammar school, but his neighborhood friends would have ostracized him if he had accepted it, and his parents were indifferent. So he turned it down and went to work. Jack had two brothers, one older (Ken) and one younger (Art). A sister died young.

At first the family lived above the shop, but they later moved to a rented house half a mile away. Jack was brought up really by his aunt Rose who lived only a hundred yards away since both of his parents worked in the shop. Jack was chubby as a kid (his nickname was Fatty Lott), but his childhood was unremarkable, except that his mother died in May, 1939, from a "wasting disease," perhaps tuberculosis. Jack's father was beyond consolation and went to bed for several months. His partner had to sell the shop. Tim Lott reckoned that his grandfather had a reactive depression.

Ken had volunteered for the army, Arthur was fifteen and at work for a manufacturer of car parts. Jack was thirteen. The family went to live with Jack's aunt, and Jack eventually roused himself and got a job as a delivery man. Jack went to work on the assembly line at an electrics factory. There were no teenage years in those days. You went from childhood to adulthood.

In 1943, Jack joined the Navy, but was never sent to sea. He worked in England for the duration of the war and was demobbed in 1946. He went back to work, dated a couple of girls seriously and, on his twenty-first birthday, used a gift from his father to buy a motorcycle. He thought of emigrating to Australia, but the plans fell through. In 1948, he quit his job to join a greengrocer for whom he had been working on Saturdays.

Jean Haynes was born on January 17, 1931, in Sheherd's Bush. Jean had two older brothers, Alan who would become mentally ill, and Norman who would become a petty criminal and later drink heavily. Her father was a baker, at first at Lyons in Battersea and then at Southall. He bought a house at Southall in 1934. Jean's childhood was also unremarkable and happy.

In 1945, she was working at a factory in the rag trade, where she met her to-be-best friend, Irene. She survived pneumonia and also dated a couple of boys before she met Jack. By 1951, they were dating, and they were married on July 12, 1952, in a Church of England ceremony. At first they lived with Jack's grand-aunt. Jean seemed somewhat spoiled to their friends -- wouldn't learn cards, wouldn't go for walks because of the flies and threw temper tantrums when she couldn't have her own way.

A son, Jeffrey, was born in March, 1954. And then Tim came along. This second pregnancy was difficult. Jean began losing hair -- eventually it was diagnosed as alopecia. They started her on pills, perhaps unwisely for Tim was born on January 23, 1956, with a hare lip and a cancerous kidney. Jean had to stay in the hospital for three months.

Jean's hair problem worsened, and eventually she took to wearing a wig continuously, except at night when she wore a headscarf. Apart from that, the family was normal, although Jeff resented Tim and there was a great deal of friction between them. They went on holiday each year to holiday camps, not to the real working class ones, but to slightly better ones. They played badminton and then tennis. They bought a house in Southall in 1958 for just over two thousand pounds, part of a six house terrace and, as conditions in England improved, so did the house, as they added the appliances and conveniences of modern life, such as vacuum cleaners, televisions, and longer holidays.

Jean was happy as a housewife and mother. She took classes in upholstery, flower-arrangements, yoga, drawing and music. She and Jack joined clubs and went to Tupperware parties. They had no aspirations, yet Tim noted that his parents and friends were not stupid. Indeed, Jack and his brother became quite good at bridge. They began to go abroad for holidays -- to Majorca and Malta and camping on the continent -- and to musical shows in London. Jean and Jack seemed to be in love, although Jack was not very demonstrative. It was always Jean who initiated any affectionate behavior.

Jean's mother died in 1970 and her father two years later. Jean now became responsible for her mentally ill older brother and for a while this was a great strain. Eventually, Alan went to bed in his parents' house and did nothing. People eventually persuaded Jean to stop helping him. He was sent to mental hospitals and, surprisingly, eventually got his life in better order. He kept the house clean and got a job, easing both the burden on Jean and her guilt

A third son, James was born in 1970, and the family remained strong and integrated. They had a core group of five couples who did things together. Jeff and Tim made it to grammar school. Tim experimented with drugs, getting picked up by the police once while on LSD. But the boys did not get into much trouble. Jeff did not do well enough to go to college, but Tim passed two A-levels.

Jeff moved away quickly, to Canada and France, eventually marrying in New Orleans without inviting his family for the wedding. When Jean and Jack later visited

Jeff in New Orleans, they could see that his marriage was bad, and indeed it soon broke up. Jeff eventually remarried, again without inviting his family. Tim moved into journalism and, for a while, did very well.

Jean now took a job at the school helping with the meals, she took art lessons, and she and Jack played tennis. But Tim noticed a change. Jean desperately wanted to succeed at something. She took tennis seriously, but never won the club championship. Her paintings were nothing more than ok. Soon, friends and family members began to die, including Jack's brother.

Tim decided to attend the London School of Economics (in 1983) and, although he graduated with a degree (in 1986), the experience shook his self-confidence, and he began to fall into a depression.

In 1986, Jack lost his job at the greengrocers. Two men took it over and closed it, leaving Jack short on his salary. He sued them and eventually was awarded 5 thousand pounds. In 1986 also, James moved in with Tim, and Jean now had lost all of her boys. Tim noticed her crying when he drove James away, but he quickly forgot the incident.

Finally, in the midst of a suicidal crisis, Tim called Jean and, eventually, moved into his parents' house. They offered to mortgage their house (the old mortgage was paid off) to get Tim treatment, but he refused. Jean would sit on his bed, often simply staring into space. She said to him once, "It's like a living death....You're making me depressed, too." However, eventually Tim was persuaded to take antidepressants, and his depression cleared up. He told his parents that his depression was an illness and that now he was fine. Jean told him that he was not.

Jean began to seem depressed. She has failed as a mother, she said. She hated the phone, her paintings were no good, she is no good at gardening, she is no good at cards and she doesn't enjoy things. She drove carelessly and was hit by another car. She seemed to be disappointed that none of her sons had given her grandchildren. She started a painting at one of her art classes and, for the first time, did not take it home with her to finish. She told Tim that she was depressed and that she had been given some pills. He tried to persuade her to take them and that her depression would lift. She told him that she didn't think she could wait that long.

Southall had changed in the 1980s. The white working class had moved out and blacks and Asians had moved in. The place had deteriorated in Jean's eyes. Jack and Jean missed the old neighborhood and would have liked to move. But they were getting old, and a new house somewhere nice would be too expensive.

On that Monday in March, 1988, Jean got up and prepared Jack's breakfast. Jack went off to work, and she went out to buy a few things for dinner. She tidied up the house. She didn't go to the school to help with the meals as usual. Instead she wrote her suicide note.

The she went upstairs and hung herself.

Jack got home at five and looked for Jean. He panicked and rushed upstairs into their bedroom. Jean had her wig on, her feet were six inches from the floor, the stool had been kicked away.

Tim has a theory about his mother's suicide. Her story, her idea of herself as a successful wife and mother, was no longer sustainable. She had no function now that her sons were gone. She had not protected her sons -- Jeff from his unhappy marriages or Tim from his depression. And everything was her fault. The story of her life no longer stood up. And as Southall decayed, even her pride in being English dissipated.

Jackie.

Please forgive me for this terrible thing I am doing, but at least it is one *brave* thing I am doing.

I cannot keep up this pretense. We have had so many happy year's and I can see the strain this is having on you, in the end you will grow to hate me. So it is time to get out of your life. You have so much to give such a bright mind and I am holding you back.

This will be bad for everybody but I hate Southall, I can see only decay, I feel alone.

I have loved you alway's and this is something you will have to be strong enough to get through, but you will, and then you can start life with somebody who will take you on to better times. Please forgive me. I love you forever.

Tell my dear friends they have been a great pleasure in my life. My darling son's. I love you.

Forgive me. Forgive me.

Jeannie

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DAVID REIMER: AN ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

David Lester

Ron and Janet Reimer were both children of Mennonite families in Manitoba, Canada. Both families had moved to the Winnipeg and then back to farms when the children were teenagers. Janet Schultz argued with her parents and was thrown out when she was fifteen. She moved out to Steinbach. While there, she met and dated Ron Reimer, a friend of her cousin's boyfriend, who was seventeen. Ron followed her to Winnipeg where she got pregnant. They were married December 19, 1964, and Janet gave birth to twin boys four weeks early on August 22, 1965, Bruce and Brian.

Both twins had phimosis, a condition in which the foreskin was too tight and restricted urination. She was advised to have them circumcised. On April 27, 1966, the surgeon decided to use a cautery machine and burnt Bruce's penis, leaving a charred residue. Brian was left uncircumcised. The Reimers later sued the hospital and surgeon and invested the settlement for Bruce to use later.

Reconstruction of penises was in its infancy in the 1960s, and so little hope was held out for Bruce. But in February, 1967, the Reimers saw an interview on Canadian television with Dr. John Money from Johns Hopkins University, about changing the gender of infants whose sexual organs were abnormal. Buoyed by hope at last, they wrote to him, and he urged them to visit him. Money believed that it was possible to change the sex of an infant in the first two-and-a-half years of life and that such a child would grow to be normal as whatever sex had been chosen. Johns Hopkins University had become a leading facility for operations on infants and on transsexuals.

Money persuaded the Reimers to convert Bruce into a girl. It is not clear whether he made it clear to them (for they never finished high school) that the treatment was experimental. In fact, Bruce would be the first case of this kind. (Previous operations had been on hermaphrodites and pseudohermaphrodites.) After much deliberation, believing that this was the only option open to help Bruce, the Reimers consented, and Bruce was surgically castrated on July 3, 1967. Both testicles were removed and rudimentary vaginal lips were created. Bruce was renamed Brenda. The Reimers were told to hide the truth from Brian and Brenda until they were much older.

Brenda was put in a dress for the first time just before her second birthday. She ripped it and tried to tear it off. This was a portent of the future.

Life As A Girl

Brenda never acted as girl. She walked like a boy, sat with her legs apart, and had male interests. She was domineering and led other kids into mischief. She preferred to pee standing up. At school in first grade, her teacher saw Brenda as negativistic, and

Brenda was soon isolated by the other kids. Her performance was so poor that the school planned to hold her back from second grade.

Money wrote up the case for publication, and the case was hailed as evidence that infants were malleable as far as gender was concerned. The case was cited in books as an unqualified success. Money presented the case in this light despite the annual visits the Reimers paid to Baltimore where it was clear that the Brenda was not adjusting to the sex change. Brenda reacted with terror to these visits, and she soon learned to tell the interviewers, including Money, what they wanted to hear. Despite this, she gave many clues that she thought of herself as a boy and she was clearly a “scrappy, headstrong, dominant little pugilist” (Colapinto, 2000, p. 83). She also threw like a boy when Money tested her.

Money used the visits to discuss sexuality with the twins, using sexually explicit language (such as “fucking”), showing them pornography, and having them strip naked and simulate rear-entry and missionary-position sexual intercourse. Ignoring the obvious evidence that Brenda behaved like a boy and the letters he received from the Reimers describing the problems that Brenda was presenting to them and to the school, Money continued to describe the case in talks and in print as a success.

When she was seven, Brenda began to resist visiting Money in Baltimore, and so Money told the Reimers to bribe the kids with visits to Disneyland and other sites. Money first raised the issue of vaginal surgery with Brenda in April, 1973, and she refused. She continued to refuse steadfastly.

In 1974, Brenda had a nervous breakdown at the prospect of visiting Baltimore, and the visit was postponed until November. Brenda now refused to speak to Money or replied only in monosyllables and often ran from the room. After this visit, Money persuaded the Reimers to parade naked in front of the children and tried to persuade them to have sex in front of the children. They refused this last request.

The school continued to label Brenda a problem pupil, and Brian too began to misbehave. He thought that he had to act up to get attention, and that year he was caught shoplifting. Hoping that a change of venue would help, the Reimers sold up in the Spring of 1975 and moved to the mountains in British Columbia. Life was hard. Ron Reimer found it hard to get a job, eventually working long hours in a sawmill, and he began to drink heavily in the evenings. Janet became depressed, at time psychotic. Janet had an affair and, when Ron found out, she took an overdose of sleeping pills. In the Fall of 1976, their trailer caught fire. Brian began to show violence toward other kids, Brenda anxiety and depression. The Reimers decided to stay together and to move back to Winnipeg, which they did in November, 1976.

At this point, the Child Guidance Clinic decided to provide psychotherapy for Brenda. (Janet Reimer was also helped and put on antidepressants.) Dr. Keith Sigmundson met with Brenda at first and decided that she needed a female therapist.

Brenda had several, the first two of whom had to end their work due to moves. These first two clearly saw that Brenda rejected femininity, but all of those involved knew that this was Money's famous case, and they were awed and tried to "educate" Brenda to be feminine - first Dr. Doreen Moggey in December, 1976, and then Dr. Janice Ingimundson in May, 1977.

At school, Brenda managed to form some friendships with a group of misfit tomboys, especially the leader, Heather. Heather saw clearly that she herself was tomboy, but that Brenda wanted to be a boy. In the summer of 1977, Money insisted that the hormone treatments should start. At first, Brenda resisted, but eventually gave in. She tried throwing the pills away, but her parents made sure she took them. She developed breasts and to disguise this she overate in order to grow fat. However, despite the hormones, her voice began to crack.

In seventh grade, she again hung out with the misfits (cripples and an intersex child). The visit to Baltimore in 1978 was so traumatic that it was the last time Brenda went to see Money. After the visit, Brenda told her parents that, if she ever had to visit Money again, she would kill herself.

Dr. Ingimundson had to drop Brenda as a client because she was pregnant, and the case was taken over by Dr. Sheila Cantor who bluntly urged that Brenda be turned back into a boy. The bluntness alienated the Reimers who demanded that Cantor be removed from the case.

In eighth grade, Brenda tried very hard at long last to act feminine hoping that, if she played the role of a girl, she might escape surgery. Some girls at the school helped her choose clothes and make-up, and she tried going to dances. However, she was still the subject of ridicule at the school, with the nickname "Cavewoman." Her schoolwork deteriorated further.

Finally, Dr. Sigmundson found a good therapist for Brenda, Dr. Mary McKenty. The therapy started in January, 1979, with McKenty using a nurturing approach which soon won over the Reimers and Brenda. Money was scheduled to visit Winnipeg in March, and Brenda and McKenty started a "Don't Want To See Dr. Money Club" with just the two of them as members. Money did visit and, stranded by a blizzard, even stayed at the Reimers overnight. He did see Brian and Brenda, but only briefly because the kids hid in the basement for most of his visit. With McKenty's support, Brenda was able to persuade her parents to never go to Baltimore to see Money again.

A decision was made to switch Brenda from the academic path into a vocational school. Brenda, now fourteen, began ninth grade at a vocational school, dressing in torn boy's clothes. She enrolled in appliance repair, but was still ridiculed by her peers who now called her "Gorilla." In December she quit, and McKenty arranged for a private tutor paid for by the government.

That winter, Janet fell into a depression again, and she was hospitalized for a month, and Ron began drinking heavily. The decision was made to tell Brenda the truth. On March 14, 1980, Ron Reimer told Brenda the facts of her life, while Janet told Brian. Brenda was relieved. She no longer felt that she was crazy. Brenda immediately resolved to revert to being a boy. She chose David and Joe as names and let her parents decide - David was chosen.

Life As A Boy

One week after his fifteenth birthday, in August 1980, David made his appearance in his family as a boy. He began to have testosterone injections which resulted in a growth spurt and facial hair. In October, he underwent a double mastectomy. He saved up \$200 and bought an unlicensed gun, and in February, 1981, he went to office of the surgeon who had burnt his penis in order to kill him. He surgeon broke down and cried when he realized who the young man was, and David left without harming him. In July, 1981, David had a rudimentary penis constructed, but the techniques were so poor that he was hospitalized eighteen times in the following year for blockages and infections.

For the following two years, David mostly stayed at home, watching television and avoiding people. However, he eventually began hanging out with Brian and his buddies, pretending that he was Brian's cousin and that Brenda had died in a plane crash. When he turned eighteen, David came into possession of the settlement, which had now grown to \$170,000. He bought a souped-up van and started dating a sixteen-year-old. He avoided sex with her, but one night they slept together (literally) and she saw his stunted penis. Within days, she had told "everyone."

David swallowed a bottle of his mother's antidepressants. His parents found him and wondered briefly whether to wake him up, but they did rush him to the hospital where his stomach was pumped. One week later, he swallowed another bottle and ran a bath in order to drown himself. This time Brian saved him. David then went off to a cabin in the woods for most of the next year. Eventually, two friends dragged him off to a vacation in Hawaii, and on the way, David began to tell them that he was really Brenda, but found that they already knew (and did not care).

After his return, just before his twenty-second birthday, David had a much improved penis reconstructed, one which would have some sensation and which could be used for sexual intercourse. Brian, divorced with two children and now remarried, introduced David to a friend of his wife. Jane Fontane had three kids by three different men, but had never married. She was five foot one and 180 pounds, a nonsmoker and nondrinker, somewhat sensitive about her weight. They liked each other from the first, started dating and, when David confessed to her his injury, she told him that she already knew. They moved in together in the Fall of 1989 and married in September, 1990. At the time that Colapinto wrote about the case, they were still happily married.

Discussion

Life was not easy from Brian either. Feeling neglected by his parents because of their concern for Brenda/David, he began a delinquent career. Shoplifting, drinking and smoking, stealing cars, using dope, fighting, and hanging out with a “bad” crowd. When Brenda changed into David, Brian lost his special place as the boy of the family.

Two weeks before David had his first surgery, in 1981, Brian drank a bottle of drain cleaner. He was taken to the hospital to have his stomach pumped. He quit school, worked in a gas station, married three years later, had two children and then divorced. Unemployed and depressed, he lost custody of his children to his parents, but then he changed. He got a union job in a metal factory, remarried, had another child, and bought a house. He took Prozac to help him with his depression. (Janet started taking lithium which helped alleviate her depressions.)

David decided to collaborate with the revelations about the failure of his “sex-change” because of the urgings of the reporter John Colapinto and of Dr. Milton Diamond who had long suspected that Money’s ideas were wrong. Colapinto’s first report appeared in *Rolling Stone* in December, 1997, and Diamond’s scholarly paper in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* in March, 1997. In those reports, and on television, David maintained his anonymity. But for Colapinto’s book, he revealed his true identity.

John Money has never recanted or apologized. His reports of the case clearly misstated the facts, and his “work” with Brian and Brenda clearly not in line with any recognized system of psychotherapy. It remains to be seen whether or not he will be censured.

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ON BEING HAPPY THAT SOMEONE HAS COMMITTED SUICIDE: TREVOR ASTON

David Lester

I was never acquainted with a suicide until some fifteen years ago when a colleague of mine at the college where I teach killed himself. My first wife and I had been friends with him and his wife, but after my divorce he sided with my wife. We also had conflicts at the college over the administration of the Criminal Justice Program. I became coordinator of that program after he had mismanaged it. After he died, I was pleased. After all, he was my enemy.

Thinking that this feeling was inappropriate in a suicidologist, I was intrigued by the reactions of Kenneth Dover to the suicide of one of his colleagues. Dover was a leading classical scholar in Great Britain, eventually becoming Master of Corpus Christi College at Oxford University in 1976.

Trevor Aston, a historian, had been a fellow at the college since 1952, and was the college librarian. Dover soon found out that Aston was not liked by his colleagues but, trying to show that he had an open mind, Dover appointed him Dean. Immediately renovation of Aston's living quarters led to friction. Aston kept asking for changes, and the cost of the renovations escalated. They fought over the lease, but eventually Dover managed to settle the problems. In 1982, when his fellowship came up for renewal, instead of the usual pro forma renewal, Aston's fellowship was renewed by a reluctant majority.

Aston drank, often to excess, but tended to deny it. He told Dover that he never drank gin while holding a gin and tonic in his hand that Dover has just given him. When confronted by Dover, Aston would eventually break down and cry, claiming that he was the worst historian in Oxford and discussing his history of mental illness. (He was on lithium for manic-depressive disorder.) But he did this only if Dover confronted him forcefully and refused to back down.

In 1982, the college reviewed the rent for Aston's house, and he sued the college. When Dover refused to back down from this conflict, Aston resigned his fellowship. Dover held off for a day and let Aston change his mind.

Eventually, Aston's second wife divorced him, whereupon Aston took an overdose and told the porter who called a doctor. Aston was hospitalized for a brief period (which included an escape). Aston moved back into college and became a chronic drunk, sleeping in a urine-soaked bed and insulting anyone he ran across. He fought efforts to allow other fellows to have an input into purchases for the college library. His condition deteriorated, and several fellows thought that Dover, as Master, should do "something" about Aston. The goal was to get rid of him as a fellow.

Dover was not sure that a majority of the college fellows would vote him out. Aston's psychiatrists thought that a letter from Dover, threatening to remove his fellowship might push Aston into suicide. Dover describes his problem as "how to kill him without getting into trouble" (p. 228). Dover wondered what he would do if Aston overdosed and called him. Could he simply do nothing? A lawyer told Dover that he might be held liable. Dover was not against "doing nothing," but he balked at lying to a coroner's jury in order to save his own skin.

Dover and Aston had a meeting in which Dover pointed out that Aston only mentioned his mental illness when he had failed to bully others into submission. When Aston said that his colleagues liked and admired him, Dover introduced the truth, that they had renewed his fellowship by only a small majority and that they found his drunken behavior intolerable.

On the night of October 16th, 1985, a friend of Aston's called Dover to say that Aston had been talking of suicide. Dover called Aston's doctor, but Aston had forbidden the doctor ever to see him again. The use of force was not possible since he had not made a suicidal act yet, and they agreed that they could do nothing. Aston killed himself that night.

Dover felt good about the suicide. He had a sound sleep and woke to sunshine. It was Day One of the post-Aston era. He regretted his decision to retire in 1986, since life as Master would so much easier now. Two other fellows told Dover that they felt nothing but relief at Aston's death.

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THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF FAMOUS SUICIDES (continued)

David Lester

In 1996, I published “An Encyclopedia of Famous Suicides” (Nova Science) in which I presented brief biographies of 334 famous completed suicides. Since then, I have come across several more, and others have written to me to inform me of some I missed. The project is an ongoing one, and I urge readers to inform me of others who merit inclusion, especially suicides in nations other than the United States.

Completed Suicides

Pier Angeli

Born: June 19 1932, Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy
Died: September 10 1971, Beverly Hills, California

Born Anna Maria Pierangeli, she was discovered by the Italian film director Leonide Moguy and appeared in her first film in Italy at the age of 16. She was soon appearing in movies in both the United States (she was signed by MGM) and Italy. Her twin sister Marissa Pavan was also a film star. She was married to Vic Damone, the singer, for four years (they had one son over whom they waged a bitter custody battle) and then an Italian band leader (Armando Travajoli) for seven years. She starred in Therese and The Battle of the Bulge, and her last film was in 1971. She died from an overdose of barbiturates, perhaps afraid of turning 40 and suffering from a stomach disorder.

Hobey Baker

Born: January 15 1892, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Died: December 21 1918, Toul, France

In his day, Baker was a romantic figure in sport, the only athlete in both the college football hall of fame and the hockey hall of fame. He was sent to St. Paul's School in Concord (NH) in 1903, and his parents divorced in 1907, leaving him and his brother to the care of relatives. At Princeton University (the family could afford to send only one of the brothers), he majored in history and played football and hockey. After graduation in 1914, he joined the firm of J. P. Morgan on Wall Street but found the work boring. He took up flying and joined the US Army in May 1917 and went to Europe as a gunner in the Lafayette Escadrille where he distinguished himself and was awarded the French Croix de Guerre. When the war ended in November 1918, Hobey felt a sense of loss and disappointment. He received his orders to return to America in December, and on the 21st, the day before he was due to leave for Paris, he took one last flight. He took a plane whose engine had failed in flight a few days earlier "to check it out" and took off in heavy rain. The engine failed in flight and, though the plane was easy to crash-land,

Hobey tried to get back to base. The plane crashed, and he died in the ambulance. Accident or suicide?

David Begelman

Born: 1921, New York City

Died: August 7, 1995, Los Angeles, USA

David Begelman grew up in the Bronx. His father was a tailor in Manhattan, served in the Air Force in World War Two, attended New York University briefly, and drifted into the insurance business. He married Esther Feldman in 1950, but Esther died of cancer a few years later. He then married Lee Reynolds and finally Gladyce Rudin who died in 1986. He left insurance to become a talent agent for, MCA and soon was an independent representing stars such as Judy Garland, Paul Newman, Robert Redford and Barbra Streisand. He was flamboyant and misrepresented his past, telling people that he had graduated from Yale University Law School. He eventually headed Columbia Pictures until he was found guilty of forging checks in 1977. He later head United Artists for a while, until he was fired from in 1982. He then set up a Ponzi fraudulent investment scheme with Bruce McNall. After his wife died in 1986, he talked about suicide, but he remarried Annabelle Weston in 1990 and had an affair with Sandi Bennett. In deep depression, as the investigations into his financial transactions grew and with bankruptcy imminent, he shot himself in the head in a Century Plaza Hotel room in Los Angeles on August 7, 1995.

Pierre Bérégovoy

Born: December 23, 1925, Déville-les-Rouen, France

Died: May 1 1993, Nevers, France

Pierre Bérégovoy, former Prime Minister of France, committed suicide after being accused of accepting an interest-free loan from a shady business friend while finance minister in the 1980s. Bérégovoy, a Socialist, was appointed Prime Minister in March 1992, but scandals were revealed involving the Socialist Party, with Bérégovoy eventually among the accused. He was re-elected by the town of Nevers (where he was both Mayor and a Deputy) in March 1993, but his party suffered a big defeat in the election. The austerity program he continued was blamed for the French recession and the high rate of unemployment. Bérégovoy shot himself on May 1 (the international workers' holiday) at the age of 67 by a lonely canal, by putting a .357 magnum under his chin and pulling the trigger, with a gun taken from his bodyguard. The French claimed that the press drove him to his death by harassing him over the possible corruption.

A high school dropout, he was nicknamed *petit chose*, (nothing). He began work in a factory at the age of 17, was involved in the Resistance, worked as a trade unionist and then for the Socialist Party, and eventually became the protégé of Pierre Mendes France, after which Bérégovoy gave his support to François Mitterand. The loan which

caused his fall and his embarrassment was to purchase a fancy apartment for himself and his wife of 45 years in Paris.

Paul Bern

Born: December 3 1889, Wandsbek, Germany

Died: September 5 1932, Beverly Hills, California

Born as Paul Levy, he was a Hollywood actor, screenwriter, director and producer. Bern married the film actress Jean Harlow on July 2, 1932, and he shot himself supposedly upset over his small penis and his impotence which Harlow was unable to cure. His suicide note to Harlow apologized for his "abject humiliation."

Sir Henry Delves Broughton

Born: 1883, England

Died: December 5 1942, Liverpool, England

Broughton, son of of a Baronet, joined the Irish Guards and avoided the First World War by falling ill before sailing for the continent. He entertained and gambled on a large scale, but eventually left his wife and son, running off to South Africa and later Kenya with a 22-year-old divorcee, Diana Caldwell. In Kenya, Diana fell in love with Josslyn Hay, Earl of Erroll and, although Broughton seemed to tolerate the affair, Erroll was found murdered in his car on January 24, 1941. Broughton was tried for the murder but acquitted. Broughton's marriage to Diana broke up, and he returned to England depressed. He was found in a hotel room in Liverpool on December 4, 1941, in a coma from injections of Medinal. He died the following day.

Kevin Carter

Born: September 13, 1960, Johannesburg, South Africa

Died: July 27, 1994, Johannesburg suburb, South Africa

Carter began his career as a journalistic photographer in 1983 and then freelanced. He was arrested on several occasions for photographic domestic conflict in South Africa. The climactic photograph of his career was of a small child dying of hunger in the Sudan while a vulture waited nearby. Carter was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for that photograph and received it at Columbia University on May 23, 1994, 23 months after taking the photograph. Two months later, Carter killed himself using the exhaust from his pick-up truck. The final words of his suicide note read, "I have always had it all at my feet but being me just fucked it up anyway."

His parents were of English descent and Roman Catholic. He recalled his childhood as unhappy, and he dropped out of college with bad grades. He was conscripted into the military, beat up by fellow soldiers for being a nigger lover, and went

AWOL> He worked as disc jockey under an assumed name, when he was fired, overdosed with sleeping pills and rat poison. He finished his service and began his photography career. While photographing the civil violence, he took to smoking marijuana and also white pipe (marijuana and a tranquilizer mix). He fathered a daughter out of wedlock, crashed his car into a house, and was arrested for driving under the influence. Early in 1994, his girl-friend asked him to leave until he cleaned up his act. In April his best friend (and rival photographer) Ken Oosterbroek was killed in a township. After receiving his Pulitzer Prize, Carter was criticized for posing the photograph and not helping the little girl. Back in South Africa, he was depressed over money and haunted by the killings and death he had witnessed. His recent photographs for Sygma were of poor quality, and he lost the photographs from an assignment in Mozambique on the plane back. He committed suicide the next day. His note said, "I have gone to join Ken if I am that lucky."

Kurt Cobain

Born: February 29 1967, Aberdeen, Washington, USA

Died: April 5 1994, near Seattle, Washington, USA

Kurt's father was a mechanic at a gas station. Kurt was hyperactive and was given Ritalin as a child. After his parents' divorce in 1975, Kurt changed from being cheerful to being sullen. He moved from mother to father to aunts and uncles. An uncle bought Kurt a guitar when he was 14, about the same time he started smoking marijuana. By high school, Kurt was writing his own songs. He dropped out before graduation, and eventually formed a band with some friends which they called Nirvana. They recorded a demo in 1988 and began touring in 1989. By 1990, Kurt was using heroin. He met and got together with Courtney Love that year and married the next year. Nirvana had the number one selling album in January 1992, but friction grew between Kurt and Courtney and between Kurt and the rest of the band. Kurt tried drug rehabilitation in March 1994 but quit after two days. He went to his home near Seattle by himself and was found dead from a gunshot wound on April 8, 1994.

Marcel DeSano

Born: May 18, 1897, Romania

Died: circa early 1930s, France

In the early 1930s, De Sano was hired by MGM to direct a movie *Red-Headed Woman* for MGM but was replaced by Jack Conway. He moved back to Paris, where he was given the task of shooting the atmospheric shots of Paris. With his career languishing, De Sano fell into a depression and killed himself.

R. Budd Dwyer

Born:

Died: January, 22, 1987, Harrisburg, PA, USA

Budd Dwyer worked as a high school teacher, small-town lawyer and state legislator. He won nomination as the Republican candidate for state treasurer and was elected. He was convicted for accepting a \$300,000 bribe in exchange for a no-bid contract. On the day before sentencing, Dwyer, aged 47, called a news conference and, on live television, in front of the press, declared his innocence, claimed that he had been unfairly singled out for prosecution, and then shot himself in the head with a .357 Magnum revolver.

Peg Entwistle

Born: July 1 1908, London, England

Died: September 18 1932, Hollywood, California

Born as Lillian Millicent Entwistle, she was a stage actress in England and came to the United States to seek film stardom. She had difficulty getting parts, and her first film, Thirteen Women (1932), was her last. Depressed and turning to alcohol for relief, she killed herself by jumping from the H of the famous HOLLYWOOD sign at the age of 24.

Frederick Fleet

Died: January 10, 1965, England

Fleet was the lookout on the Titanic and reported the iceberg to First Officer Murdoch. At the inquiries, he revealed the absence of binoculars in the crow's nest and was ostracized by the surviving senior officers. He served at sea for another 24 years and then, depressed, quit to work at a shipyard. After retirement, he sold newspapers in his home town of Southampton. He hanged himself from the clothes post in his garden at the age of 76, two weeks after his wife died.

Joseph Goebbels

Born: October 29, 1897, Rheydt, Germany

Died: May 1, 1945, Berlin, Germany

Born into a Catholic family, Goebbels tried writing poems and novels and eventually obtained a Ph.D. at the University of Heidelberg in 1921. He went first to work at a bank but was fired. Although he initially laughed at the Nazi party, he attended meetings, joined and became the business manager for a regional unit of the party. Although Goebbels was a socialist at heart, he suppressed his views, became editor of the official newsletter of the party. Hitler recognized that Goebbels was outstanding at propaganda, appointed him Gauleiter of Berlin in 1926, and Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda in 1933. Goebbels expanded his ministry, taking over the

newspapers, radio station and film industry. He worked hard to eliminate the Communists, political opponents and Jews. As the defeat became imminent, he and his wife, Magda, planned their death together with their six children. During the battle for Berlin, SS doctor Helmut Kunz injected all the children with morphine injections, and Magda put cyanide in their mouths. Goebbels and Magda probably also used cyanide for their suicides, and their bodies were found on May 2 by the Russians.

Adam Gordon

Born: October 19 1833, Faial, Azores, Portugal
Died: June 24 1870, Brighton, Victoria, Australia

His father, a retired military officer in Britain, found Gordon so difficult to handle that he sent him to Australia at the age of 13. He worked as a horse-breaker and steeple chase rider, wrote sporting verses for newspapers and served in the South Australia House of Assembly. He wrote two books of poetry to little acclaim. In 1868, he suffered a serious riding accident, his child died and his wife left him. Although his wife came back, in 1870 he had another riding accident and lost his claim to a Scottish family estate. He fell into a depression just as his third volume of poetry was being published, and he shot himself on the beach at Brighton.

Mary Bowen Hall

Born: June 13 1932, Oakland, California, USA
Died: 1994.

Hall worked for the Division of Agricultural Sciences at the University of California in educational communications as a writer and journalist. She later published detective stories (such as *The Queen Anne Killer*) whose heroine was Emma Chizzit. In 1989, she learned that she had breast cancer and that it had spread. She lived with the cancer for five years, trying various treatments, including bone marrow transplants, finally ending her life in early 1994 with an overdose of Seconal. Her dying and death was described in the May 22 1995 issue of People.

Oshio Heihachiro

Born: 1793, Osaka, Japan
Died: 1837, Osaka, Japan

Formerly an eminent Confucian scholar and police official and now retired, Heihachiro led an uprising against the Tokugawa shogunate in 1837, a year of famine. Heihachiro felt that the rulers were doing little to help the starving people, and so he sold his possessions, including his library, to feed the poor and to purchase arms for them. The rebellion on March 25th was a fiasco. After, first setting fire to his own house as a signal, Heihachiro led the rank-and-file supporters to the warehouses to distribute the food, but

the people began looting for themselves. His peasant army failed to materialize, and the revolt was over by the time the news reached Edo. The commander of Osaka Castle began to hunt down the rebels, many of whom committed suicide. Heihachiro fled to the Kii Peninsular and tried to escape with his son and two colleagues. One colleague committed seppuku, with Heihachiro beheading him, and the other hung himself. Heihachiro and his son returned to Osaka five days after the rebellion and hid in the house of a towel-merchant. After two weeks, a maid noticed that a large amount of rice was being consumed. When this news reached the local magistrate, he persuaded the merchant to confess and set out to capture Heihachiro. As the police attacked the house, Heihachiro stabbed his son, set fire to the house and severed his own carotid artery.

Margaux Hemingway

Born: February 19 1955, Portland, Oregon
Died: July 2 1996, Santa Monica, California

Margaux (actually Margot) grew up on a farm in Ketchum, Idaho, the son of Jack Hemningway and the granddaughter of Ernest. Her movie began in her early twenties, but it soon fizzled out. She had two failed marriages and began drinking heavily. Toward the end of her life, she was working on a psychic hotline and appearing in x-rated trading cards for *Playboy*. At the age of 41, she was living alone in a studio apartment, with no children, no lover and few friends. She overdosed on the anniversary of her grandfather's suicide.

George Hill

Born: April 25 1895, Douglas, Kansas, USA
Died: August 10 1934, Venice, California, USA

Hill started at the age of 13 working as a stagehand for D. W. Griffith and worked his way up (cinematographer and screenwriter) to become a director in the 1920s. His most famous movie was *Big House* (1930). He was married in 1930 and divorced in 1933, and he killed himself the following year.

Phyllis Hyman

Born: July 6, 1950, Philadelphia
Died: June 30, 1995, New York City

Phyllis was born in Philadelphia, the oldest of seven children, and raised in Pittsburgh. After working as a legal secretary, she built a singing career, known for jazz and rhythm and blues. She was nominated for a Tony for her performance in *Sophisticated Lady* on Broadway. She killed herself with an overdose of pills just before a performance as the second-ranked act at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. Her suicide note read in part, "I'm tired. I'm tired. Those of you that I love, know who you are. May

God bless you." Phyllis had been addicted to drugs and alcohol, was briefly married to her producer Larry Alexander, and had previously attempted suicide. Possible precipitants for her suicide include financial troubles (including hassles with the IRS), career disappointments, a possible break-up with a boyfriend (though her sister denied this), and grief over the death of mother two years earlier (in May 1993).

Eugene Izzi

Born: circa 1953, Chicago

Died: December 7, 1996, Chicago

Izzi's father was a small-time gangster who served time in prison for armed robbery. Izzi served in the Army and then as a steel worker. His first attempts at writing, in which he was encouraged by his wife, were unsuccessful (he had seven unpublished novels), until he began a series of crime novels. They were quite good, but Izzi did not become as famous as John Grisham and Robert Parker. On December 7th, 1996, Izzi was found hanging outside the window of his 14th-floor office in Chicago, wearing a bullet-proof vest. The rope went through the window and was tied to the leg of his desk. A loaded revolver was on the floor of the office and a bullet hole in the office wall. The office door was locked from the inside. His coat pocket contained discs with a story in which the same thing happens to the hero who is strung up in this way in a murder attempt. Izzi, who had been an alcoholic and drug addict in the past, had been undergoing treatment for depression. His death was ruled a suicide by the medical examiner.

Brian Keith

Born: November 14 1921, Bayonne, New Jersey

Died: June 24 1997, Malibu, California.

Keith's father and mother were both stage actors, and Keith spent much of his childhood on the road with them. He first appeared on the stage at the age of three. In World War Two he was machine gunner in the Marines. After the war, he worked on the stage, on television and in films. He had three wives (and three divorces), four children and three adopted children. At the end of his life, he was suffering from emphysema and lung cancer. He shot himself after a stay in the hospital.

Kay Kent

Born: 1964, England

Died: June 13 1989, Chatham, Kent, England

Kay was a television model who earned her living by looking like Marilyn Monroe, appearing a television and newspaper advertisements. She had surgery to increase her resemblance to Marilyn and was the highest paid model for her agency. Her lover had broken off their relationship two months earlier, and her mother had recently

died. She left a note to her ex-lover and committed suicide with a mixture of alcohol and medication.

Valeri Legasov

Born: c 1936, USSR

Died: April 27 1988, Moscow, USSR

Legasov, the First Deputy Director of the Kurchatov Institute in Moscow and a member of the Academy of Sciences since 1980, was the scientist placed in charge of the scientific team the day of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster on April 26, 1986. Flying there the day of the disaster he ordered burying the reactor in sand (mixed with boron, lead and dolomite). Later he was appointed to the team preparing a report on the disaster, and he presented the report on August 25th to an international conference in Vienna, a report which placed all of the blame on the staff at Chernobyl and which covered up the faults in the design of the reactor. He delivered a report of the true circumstances to the Academy of Sciences, which ignored the it. His enemies worked for his defeat in an election at the Kurchatov Institute, and he was not among those decorated for their work at Chernobyl. He attempted to kill himself with an overdose of sleeping pills but was revived. After hospitalization in October for his chronic kidney disease, he again attempted suicide. He formulated plans for an Institute of Industrial Safety, but the Academy of Sciences rejected in on April 25th, 1988. He killed himself at home, by hanging from the balustrade in the stairwell, two days later.

Louis II of Bavaria (also known as Ludwig II)

Born: August 25, 1845, Nymphenburg

Died: June 13, 1886, Starnberger See

Louis succeeded to the throne of Bavaria after the death of his father Maximilian II at the age of 18 on March 10, 1864. After taking the side of Austria and suffering several military defeats, became pro-Prussian, anti-Catholic and anti-socialist. He expelled the Jews from Bavaria in 1871 and adopted the North German Criminal Code in 1879. Louis fell under the influence of Richard Wagner and spent huge sums of money supporting the opera. Although betrothed, he never married and, as his behavior grew more bizarre, a committee of psychiatrist declared him insane, and his uncle assumed the regency. While walking with his psychiatrist, he tried to drown himself in the lake at Castle Berg and succeeded in drowning himself and his psychiatrist.

J Anthony Lukas

Born: April 25, 1933, New York City

Died: June 5m 1997, New York City

Born to a lawyer father and actress mother and with a younger brother, Lukas went to Harvard University, and worked as a reporter for the Baltimore Sun and New York Times. He was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes, for reporting (in 1968) and for a book Common Ground on school bussing (in 1986). He was married, but in great anxiety over the publication of his new book Big Trouble. Friends reported that he had long battled depression, but rarely took his antidepressants. His mother suffered from manic-depression and killed herself when he was eight. (She slit her throat in her psychiatrist's garage in 1941. Two other relatives also committed suicide.) He strangled himself with the belt of a robe just prior to the appearance of the pre-publication copies sent to reviewers.

Donnie Moore

Born: 1954, Lubbock, Texas, USA

Died: July 18, 1989, USA

The son of an African American truck driver, Moore excelled in baseball at high school, married his high school sweetheart, and signed with the major leagues in 1973, and was drafted by the California Angels in 1984. He pitched well and was in the all-star game in 1985. In the 1986 playoffs against the Boston Red Sox, Moore gave up a home run to Dave Henderson, and the Angels lost the game and the series. Moore's performance declined in the following years, and he drank heavily and grew despondent. At the end of the 1988 season, the Angels released him, and the Kansas City Royals signed him but sent him to the minors before releasing him. His wife then left him (she later said that he had abused her repeatedly during their marriage), and he was in financial difficulty. On July 18, 1989, a prospective buyer came to see the Moores' house, and his wife stopped by. Moore and his wife got into an argument, and Moore left to fetch his gun. He returned and shot his wife. She took her daughter and drove herself to the hospital. Meanwhile, Moore fired the last shot into his head.

Phil Ochs

Born: December 19 1940, USA

Died: April 9 1976, Far Rockaway, New York, USA

Phil's father was Jewish, studied in England to become a doctor because of the restrictions on Jewish applicants to American medical schools, and returned home to America to practice medicine. Phil showed musical ability early, went off to Ohio State University but quit with one semester to go after being rejected as editor of the campus newspaper. He went to New York City and wrote folk songs for some friends. He got his girl friend, Alice, pregnant and married her to legitimize the child. His fame grew, and he appeared in many concerts and had several records. Over time, his songs moved from political protest to become more commercial. Alice left him to go to California with their daughter, and Phil found a girl friend, moved to Los Angeles, but began to deteriorate. He was anxious and depressed and drank as well as taking Valium and amphetamines. He

got involved with political radicals and visited Chile and Africa where he was attacked and robbed resulting in damage to his vocal cords. He grew increasingly irrational, spent all of his savings to open a bar in Greenwich Village which closed after a couple of weeks. He went back and forth between Los Angeles and New York City, was arrested for drunk driving several times. Finally, he went out to Far Rockaway to stay with his sister. He seemed to improve but hung himself on April 9 1976.

Billy Papke

Born: September 17 1886, Spring Valley, Illinois, USA

Died: Thanksgiving Day, 1936, California, USA

The son of a miner, he too became a miner but boxed on his evenings off. He turned professional in 1905, won several bouts and earned the nickname "the Illinois Thunderbolt." He was defeated by the reigning middleweight champion, Stanley Ketchel, in June 1908, but claimed he had been hit while trying to shake hands. At the rematch in September 1908, he hit Ketchel during the handshake. He lost the next two rematches with Ketchel. Papke retired in 1913, reasonably well-off. He settled in California with his wife and three sons. His wife left him and divorced him in August 1936. On Thanksgiving Day, he drove to her house, shot her three times and then shot himself twice. They both died.

H Beam Piper

Born: 1904, Altoona, PA

Died: November 11, 1964

A science fiction writer (*Junkyard Planet, Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*). He worked on the engineering staff of the Pennsylvania Railroad and lived near Williamsport, PA. He committed suicide as a result of family problems.

Jo Roman

Born: February 3 1917, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

Died: June 10 1979, New York City, USA

Jo Roman went to college where she met a high school graduate, Bill, and married him secretly. They had two children before Bill died of a heart attack. Jo went off to Alaska to work as an interior designer, but her depression led her to send her children to a friend to raise. She qualified as a social worker in New York City, married and divorced a second husband, and then met and married Mel Roman, a psychologist. Jo became interested in assisted suicide and planned a book on the topic. When she was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer, she decided to forego treatment and commit suicide. She did so on June 10, 1979, with an overdose of Seconal, leaving a book on assisted for publication, *Exit House*.

Lazarus Salii

Born: 1936, Angaur, Palau

Died: August 20 1988, Tiull, Koror, Palau

Lazarus Salii was the second elected President of Palau, a flotilla of Pacific Islands, south of Guam and east of the Philippines, a republic, though still a trust territory of the United States. Salii was elected after the first president was assassinated. Educated in Hawaii, after the war, Salii worked actively for the independence of Palau from American control, becoming a senator in the Congress of Micronesia. Palau's constitution banned nuclear materials from the islands, and Salii could not get the population to overturn this requirement. (It required a 75% majority, and Salii could get no more than 73% support.) At the time of Salii's death, Washington had sent auditors and prosecutors to probe his administration for wrong-doing, and his political opponents were objecting to his policies. The country of fourteen thousand people was fragmented, and it was far from certain that Salii would win re-election.

Everett Sloan

Born: October 1 1909, New York City, New York

Died: August 6 1965, Brentwood, California.

He first appeared on the stage at the age of seven and later left the University of Pennsylvania to join the Hedgerow Theater in Moylan, Pennsylvania. He worked as a Wall Street runner until he began to get stage and film roles, including Citizen Kane, The Lady from Shanghai and Journey into Fear. He worked a great deal on Orson Well's projects, including the famous Halloween Martian Invasion. He married an actress, Luba Herman, in 1933 and had two children. Worried over his failing eyesight, he overdosed with sleeping pills and was found by his wife.

Inger Stevens

Born: October 18, 1934, Stockholm, Sweden

Died: April 30, 1970, Hollywood, California, USA

Inger came to the USA when she was 13 with her father after he divorced her mother. She ran away to Kansas City at the age of 16 where she worked as a burlesque dancer. Her first marriage, which lasted only four months, was to an agent, Anthony Soglio, who changed her name to Stevens. She went to New York in 1951 to study at the Actors Studio with Lee Strasberg and worked in theater, in a successful television series (*The Farmer's Daughter*) and then, in the 1960s, in Hollywood movies (such as *Firecreek* with James Stewart and Henry Fonda). She suffered from chronic depression and attempted suicide on January 1, 1959, with sleeping pills and ammonia. She survived a fiery plane crash in Lisbon in 1961, and killed herself at the age of 35 with an overdose

of barbiturates. After her death, a second marriage was revealed -- to Isaac Jones, a black musician, in 1961.

John Kennedy Toole

Born: 1937, New Orleans, LA.

Died: March 26, 1969, Biloxi, MS

Toole earned his Master's degree from Columbia University and went on to become a college teacher. In the early 1960s, while stationed as a soldier in Puerto Rico, he wrote a novel, but it was rejected for publication. After his suicide, his mother continued to work for its publication and eventually persuaded Walker Percy to read it. Percy liked it and helped get it published in 1980: *A Confederacy of Dunces*. It was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1981.

Randy Turpin

Born: June 7 1928, Leamington, England

Died: May 18 1966, Leamington, England

Turpin was the son of an immigrant from British Guiana (Guyana) who died when Turpin was three months old. His mother was the daughter of a boxer, and Turpin became a fine amateur boxer, winning five national titles. After the bar to black boxers fighting for professional titles was abolished, Turpin's brother won the light heavyweight championship. After his brother was beaten, Turpin won the European title and then beat Sugar Ray Robinson in 1951. In the rematch in September, Sugar Ray knocked Turpin out. Turpin continued to fight. He was arrested for raping his lover in New York City in 1953, and his wife in England divorced him. He retired in 1959, ran a small cafe and tried wrestling. He remarried and had three daughters. He was pursued by the Inland Revenue Service for back taxes and had to declare bankruptcy. On May 16, 1966, a final demand for taxes arrived and three days later he took his two-year-old daughter up to the attic, shot her (she survived) and then himself.

Lupe Velez

Born: July 18 1908, San Luis Potosi, Mexico

Died: December 13 1944, Beverly Hills, California.

Giadelupe Velez de Villalobos was the daughter of a prostitute. She was sent to a convent in Texas when she was thirteen but returned to her family after a few years. She worked as a sales girl but learned to dance. She appeared on the Mexican stage in 1924 and went to Hollywood in 1927. She appeared in many movies from 1927 to 1944, including the Mexican Spitfire series. She was the second wife of Johnny Weismuller, one of the portrayers of Tarzan on the screen. They divorced after a stormy five year marriage. She had an affair with Gary Cooper, but he refused to marry her. Her self-

esteem, career and bank account went into downward spirals. She became pregnant by her lover, Harald Ramond, but he would not marry her, and she would not have an abortion. She tried to kill herself with Seconal but appeared to have drowned in the toilet. Her suicide note expressed her anger at Ramond.

James Whale

Born: July 22 1889 (or 1896), Dudley, Staffordshire, England

Died: May 29 1957, Hollywood, California

Whale started as a newspaper cartoonist. After being captured during World War One, he wrote, directed and acted in play in his prisoner of war camp. After the war, he joined the theater as actor and producer, running the Savoy Theatre in London for a while. He came to America and directed horror movies, such as *The Bride of Frankenstein* and *The Invisible Man*, mostly for Universal. Toward the end of his career he also directed musicals, such as *Showboat*. He retired in 1941 to paint. He drowned himself in his swimming pool while suffering from ill health, including the after-effects of a stroke. A homosexual, he left no survivors. Lions Gate released a fictional movie of his last days in 1998 called *Gods and Monsters*.

Faron Young

Born: February 25, 1932, Shreveport, Louisiana

Died: December 10, 1996, Nashville, Tennessee

Young dropped out of Centenary College (LA) to become a country music star, with a honky-tonk style. He soon became a leading singer and composer and joined the Grand Ole Opry. He topped the charts in the 1960s and 1970s with hits such as *Hello Walls* and *It's Four in the Morning* and appeared in several movies. He founded the *Music City News*, a monthly magazine and owned his own music publishing firm and a racing track in Nashville (Sulphur Dell). His marriage ended in divorce in the early 1980s and, prior to his suicide, he had prostate surgery and was suffering from emphysema. He shot himself in the head at home in Old Hickory (TN) on December 9th and died, at the age of 64, in a Nashville hospital the following day.

Attempted Suicides

Clare Boothe Luce

Born: March 10 1903, New York City, USA

Died: October 9 1987, New York City, USA

Clare's father was a musician who moved the family a lot as his work demanded, until he abandoned them in 1911. Clare's mother later married a surgeon who provided the family with entry into the higher social classes, and Clare, now aged 20, met and

married a 43 year-old multimillionaire, George Brokaw. They had one child, but George was a alcoholic and wife-beater. Clare divorced him after six years of marriage. Clare met and married Henry Luce, the founder of Time, in 1935. While Luce worked steadily for his magazine empire, Clare wrote plays, ran and won a seat on the House of Representatives, and was appointed by President Eisenhower as Ambassador to Italy. Luce died in 1967 at the age of sixty-eight, and Clare died in 1987 at the age of eighty-four.

The Luces' marriage was strained by affairs on both of their parts, but Luce's were more intense, and twice he seriously explored divorcing Clare. On both occasions, Clare attempted suicide -- cutting her wrists in 1946 and overdosing and threatening to jump out of a window in 1960.

Kathy Ormsby

Born: November 1 1964, Rockingham, North Carolina, USA
 Attempt: June 4 1986, Indianaopolis, Indiana, USA

While running in the finals of the 10,000 meter race at the NCAA championships at Indiana University in Indianapolis on June 4, 1986, Karen Ormsby, who had broken the collegiate record six weeks earlier at the Penn Relays, dropped out of the race and ran out of the stadium. She ran toward a bridge that crosses the White River and jumped from it to the ground below. She survived.

She had been valedictorian of her high school class and a star runner. She continued her stellar career at North Carolina State University. Very religious, she set high standards for herself and felt that losing a race was a personal failure as well as letting others down. In several recent races, had suffered blackouts and fallen down during the race. She remains paralyzed from the waist down.

Children Who Completed Suicide

Richard Meeker

Born:
 Died: October 14 1880, Los Angeles, USA

Meeker was the 24 year-old son of movie and television actress Mary Tyler Moore and her first husband. Richard was talking to his girl friend in Fresno while playing with a sawed-off shotgun, loading and unloading it. After the call ended, with one of his two female roommates in the room, he shot himself in the head. His death may have been suicide or an accident. Ironically, his mother had played the mother of a suicidal son in the movie Ordinary People.

Eugene O'Neill, Jr.

Born:

Died: September 15 1950, Woodstock, New York, USA

O'Neill was the son of the famous playwright Eugene O'Neill by his first wife, Kathleen Jenkins. He said that he never met his father until he was twelve. He went to Yale University where he eventually earned a Ph.D. He became a noted Greek scholar and taught at several colleges, including Yale University. He married twice but, at the age of 40, was living alone in Woodstock (New York), in low spirits. He had recently appeared in a play for charity in Woodstock, and he was scheduled to begin teaching at the New School for Social Research on the evening of the day he was discovered. He was found by a neighbor with his left wrist and ankle slashed.

Spouses Who Completed Suicide

Diane Painter

Born:

Died: January 15, 1995, USA

Diane's husband, Dwayne, was the quarterback coach for the San Diego Chargers who played (and lost) in the Super Bowl in January 1995. As Dwayne took coaching jobs around the country, Diane moved the family with him, often working as a school teacher to supplement the family income. In order to strive for Dwayne's goal of coaching in the Super Bowl, Diane was re-certified as a teacher seven times. In 1991, Diane had had enough, and she stayed in Pittsburgh when Dwayne moved to Indianapolis. On the night that San Diego beat the Pittsburgh Steelers for the AFC Championship, Diane went to her garage and died from car exhaust poisoning. Her suicide note read: I love you all. Please forgive me. Her children decided to throw their mother's ashes into the ocean at Mendocino, California. As they stood there, a huge wave hit them and swept them into the ocean. Doug (23) climbed to safety; Debbie (32) drowned.

Harriet Westbrook

Born: 1796, London, England

Died: November 9, 1816, London, England

Percy Bysshe Shelley proposed to and married Harriet when she was 16 and he was 19 -- they eloped to Scotland for the marriage -- having told a friend that he was marrying Harriet to prevent her from killing herself. Harriet was born into a middle-class family, the youngest of four daughters, only two of whom survived into adulthood. Harriet met Shelley through his younger sister (Harriet acted as a go-between for letters between them). After the marriage, Shelley's best friend, Thomas Hogg, tried to seduce Harriet, but she held him off. Harriet had a daughter, Ianthe, in June 1813. In March 1814, Shelley became of age, and he remarried Harriet to ensure that their union was

legal. However, Shelley was drifting away from Harriet, spending more and more time with Mary Goodwin, the daughter of one of his friends, and he ran off with her in July 1814. Shelley continued to write to Harriet, trying to convince her that they could all be friends. Harriet was living at home where she gave birth to a son, Charles, in November. Harriet hoped for two years that Shelley would return to her, and her children were boarded with a minister in 1816 to prevent Shelley claiming them. Harriet became pregnant by another man and left her stern father to live alone in London. She was depressed and disappeared on November 9th. Her body was found a month later in the Serpentine River.

Parents Who Committed Suicide

Mikhail Baryshnikov

Born: January 27 1948, Riga, Latvia

Baryshnikov was born in Latvia to Russian parents. His father worked for the Russian military. Baryshnikov adored his mother who took him to ballet and aroused his interest in dancing. At the age of eleven, he enrolled in a dancing school, despite his father's opposition. Soon after this, his father took Baryshnikov on a holiday, leaving his wife behind. While they were away, she hung herself, for reasons which Baryshnikov still does not understand. Baryshnikov continued his dance training, at the Leningrad Ballet School and performed with the Kirov Ballet. He defected to the west in June, 1974, while touring with a Soviet ballet troupe on Canada. He later joined the American Ballet Theatre.

RICHARD BRAUTIGAN

David Lester

The facts are these. Richard Brautigan was born in 1938 in Spokane, Washington, and became one of the major literary figures of the 1960s with books such as *Trout Fishing in America* and *In Watermelon Sugar*. He married and divorced twice and had one daughter. After the 1960s, he continued to write, but his books were no longer popular. He began to drink more heavily, and he shot himself in the head in 1984 in his cabin in Bolinas, California.

His daughter Ianthe Brautigan, has recently written a memoir about her father. A question. Why do people think that, because their parent, child or spouse committed suicide, they have something of interest to say, and why do publishers think that the resulting memoir has merit? A biography is of great interest; a description of how difficult it was to survive a crisis is of little interest. But let us see what Ianthe Brautigan tells us about her father.

Richard told his daughter very little about his childhood, his parents or his family. He never even told Ianthe his mother's name.

Richard was born in Tacoma, Washington, according to his daughter and lived there for eight years. He was baptized a Catholic. He lived in poverty, partly as a result of his family's status and because of the Great Depression. Ianthe describes his family as poor white trash. Richard's mother told Ianthe that one of the first baby-sitters she left him with (while she worked) barely fed him, and he became malnourished. The family moved a lot, and many of his stepfathers were violent. Richard told Ianthe of one stepfather finishing cooking dinner after he had knocked Richard's mother unconscious with the frying pan. Some of them beat him, but his mother eventually married a good man when Richard was thirteen (who worked at a tire shop). Richard thought his surname was Portersfield until he graduated from high school, when his mother told him who his real father was. His mother drank a lot too. He talked of sisters and brothers, but Ianthe knew of and met only one, a sister, Barbara. Ianthe heard from Barbara after 32 years of no contact. Barbara told Ianthe that Richard had baby-sat her a lot while their mother worked, and had taken her fishing and hunting quite a bit. Richard had a paper route and picked vegetables in the summer until he was old enough to work in the cannery. He and his sister, Barbara, used to collect glass returnables by the highway to make money.

From Barbara, Ianthe was able to trace Richard's mother, Mary Lou. Ianthe talked to her on the telephone and visited her. She found out that her great-great-grandparents ran a poorhouse in Missouri while her great-grandmother Bessie was bootlegger, selling moonshine whiskey during Prohibition. Bessie bought a tavern in St. Helens and then worked as cook in Tacoma, Washington. Mary Lou would not talk about Bernard Brautigan, her husband whom she married when she was 16, but left while she was

pregnant with Richard in 1935. Brautigan denied that Richard was his child, and Mary Lou went to live with her brother. Richard met his father only twice, briefly both times. Two of Bernard Brautigan's siblings committed suicide, a brother and a sister.

Richard discovered poetry in his adolescence and decided to be a writer over the objections of his mother. She wanted him to get a job, but the jobs open to him were unskilled, such as pumping gas and picking fruit. For example, he worked in a pickle factory for a while after he left high school. There was no money for him to go to college, although he was quite good at academics.

He spent a few months in the Salem Mental Hospital. He was sent there after he threw rocks at a police station in order to get arrested because he was hungry. He was there for three months, and they gave him ECT. After his release, he left for San Francisco. He met and married Virginia Adler, and they had a daughter, Ianthe, in 1960. Richard and Virginia split up (on Christmas Eve in 1963) when Ianthe was three. His writing matured, and his early books (*Trout Fishing in America* appeared in 1967) were published to great acclaim in the counterculture movement. In all, he wrote eleven books, a book of short stories and nine books of poetry.

Ianthe stayed with her mother after the marriage broke up, and they lived mostly in the Bay Area. Richard stayed in San Francisco too, for nine years in an apartment on Geary Street, so Ianthe visited him and stayed with him a lot after he moved in to Geary Street when she was five. For the first few years, Ianthe lived in town too, and Richard would pick her up. After Ianthe moved with her mother to Sonoma County, Ianthe would catch the Greyhound bus into San Francisco and Richard would meet her at the bus station. After she turned ten, she would take a taxi to his apartment whereupon Richard would pay the driver.

In the later 1960s, Richard's books brought him wealth, but the fame brought him stress, so that he was often irritable. In 1974, construction on Geary Street forced Richard to move, and he was never as comfortable again. His drinking also began to get worse after the move.

Richard bought a ranch in 1974 in Paradise Valley, Montana, about sixteen miles from Livingston, and Ianthe began visiting him there rather than in Bolinas, although Richard kept the house in Bolinas, California. Richard first took Ianthe to Montana in October 1973, when she was thirteen, and she was aware that Richard needed her. When her mother and half-siblings moved to Hawaii, Ianthe shuttled back and forth between Montana and Hawaii. At first, Richard tried ranching, but his efforts to raise pigs and chickens failed.

Ianthe noted that stories and writing were the most important activity for her father and his friends, far ahead of wives, children and even themselves. In Montana, Richard and his friends would gather, cook and tell stories. Drugs were common, but Ianthe was protected from them, and Richard himself did not use cocaine or marijuana.

He drank and took Valium for sleep. Richard could not drive, and so others had to drive him to pick up Ianthe and into town for shopping. At first, Ianthe visited him in summers, but in 1975 she stayed for the school year. Unfortunately, Richard decided to leave Montana at the end of October, leaving Ianthe with friends to finish the school year. In 1976, Richard went to Japan, but he returned to Montana in the summer. Ianthe's friend who visited them there described Richard as autocratic, self-centered and arbitrary, and she noted that Ianthe was vulnerable to his whims and demands. Ianthe joined her mother in Hawaii for the Fall of 1976 and went to school there.

Richard had several girl friends in Montana, but he seemed unable to have a long-term relationship. He also began to visit Japan, staying in the Keio Plaza Hotel in Tokyo, where he met and married his second wife, Akiko. Ianthe visited him there in the summer of 1977, staying on the 26th floor of the hotel while her father stayed on the 35th floor. As the 1970s passed, Richard's heavy drinking grew worse.

By the time Ianthe started college, Richard had returned to San Francisco with Akiko. Ianthe stayed with them for a little while and then moved out to Bolinas. Akiko and Richard had split up by 1980, and Richard moved back to Montana. Ianthe visited him there to close the house up for the winter. The divorce had left Richard short of cash, and the reviews of his new books were quite negative.

In 1984, Richard was going to visit his ranch in Montana, but he shot himself before he left. He set up timers in the house so that the radio played and the lights came on and off, and his answering machine filled up with messages. Was he planning to leave, or was he planning that his body would not be discovered for a while?

Richard began talking about death when Ianthe was eight, and he suffered from severe insomnia.¹⁰ A bad night was four or five hours sleep. He told her when she was fourteen that he hadn't killed himself during her visit because he didn't want her to find his body. At that time, in Montana, Ianthe tried to stop his drinking by pouring all his alcohol down the sink, but Richard did not notice the loss. He raged and had blackouts, and Ianthe called her mother for help. After raging at Ianthe one night, Richard suppressed his rage at her until she was 21 and about to get married. When she was twenty and a freshman in college, he again went through a suicidal crisis, calling her on the telephone, and she would beg him not to kill himself. He later objected to her marriage and refused to come to her wedding. He again called her in the middle of the night, drunk and angry.

He killed himself when she was 24 with a .44 Magnum on the second floor of the house in Bolinas, near the walk-in fireplace, standing up, facing the ocean. Ianthe still doesn't know why.

¹⁰ Richard was very pale and never let himself get tanned by the sun. He claimed that he could barely swim. He had scoliosis in his back and bit his finger nails down to the quick.

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AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON

David Lester

McPherson, a leading evangelist of the time, was rumored to have killed herself in September, 1944, at the age of 53. The coroner's jury ruled the death as due to an accidental overdose of barbiturates. Epstein's (1993) biography of Aimee Semple McPherson is quite poor. Epstein appears to have done little research for this biography, relying primarily on newspaper reports, and many of the crucial people in McPherson's life refused to reveal anything personal about McPherson. Epstein concocts an imagined death scene in which McPherson took some barbiturates as a sleeping aid, became confused as to whether she had taken them, and took more until she overdosed. (Epstein imaginatively constructs her thoughts during that night despite the fact that McPherson was alone.) However, if we take Epstein's construction as possibly correct, then we have a rare case of "drug automatism." Most cases reported in the literature of drug automatism are from physicians or nurses who survived a suicide attempt by overdose and who seem to claim drug automatism in order to deny that they were suicidal. An examination of McPherson's life, however, may give us clues as to whether her life path was one that might have ended in suicide.

Early Years

Aimee Kennedy was born in a farmhouse, near Salford, Ontario (in Canada) on October 9, 1890. Her father, James Kennedy, was a fifty year-old widower who married his fifteen year-old housekeeper, Minnie Pearce, across the border in Michigan. Minnie had come to the house at the age of 14 to help care for James's dying wife and stayed on. Minnie's mother was a "shouting Methodist" who became enamored of the Salvation Army, and Minnie too pledged herself to support the Salvation Army at the age of twelve soon after her mother died. She became ill at the age of thirteen and saw the advertisement for a live-in nurse placed by James.

The family was very religious. James was a Methodist, and Minnie continued to support the Salvation Army. The years seemed to have been happy, although Minnie later told her daughter, Aimee, that they were miserable.

Aimee was born in 1890, and Minnie consecrated her right away to the Salvation Army. Aimee was raised on the farm. She was bright, funny and willful, even subversive. She was ridiculed at first at school for being a Salvation Army brat, but she rose to be their leader. She soon became a nuisance, carrying out pranks such as placing glue on the teacher's chair. At the age of fourteen she entered the Ingersoll Collegiate Institute, and she had already won public speaking contests and become a celebrated public speaker. At the local Methodist church, Aimee received training in speech, music and drama, and she became the star performer in church productions.

At the Institute, she came across books on evolution, and she read Darwin, along with Voltaire and Paine. She began to argue against the religious beliefs of her parents and the congregation, and she also wrote to a Montreal newspaper in July, 1906, to argue for her position. But in December 1907, she accompanied her father to hear a visiting preacher, Robert Semple, six feet two, handsome and witty. Aimee converted, a conversion that Epstein describes as one part religion and nine parts love. She immediately gave up music, dance and drama and started attending the meetings of the Pentecostal "Holy Rollers." She cut school and isolated herself for a week to pray and eventually had a fit of trembling and speaking in tongues in the presence of Semple. Six months later, on August 12, 1908, they married.

Two Marriages

Aimee now followed the Pentecostal faith. Semple worked in a locomotive boiler factory to support them and their evangelism. Semple was ordained on January 2, 1909, in Chicago, and they went to Findlay to stay at a mission, where Aimee fell down stairs and broke her ankle and tore ligaments. She took the train back to Chicago using crutches, hobbled to her apartment, and heard a voice telling her that her ankle would be healed. She went to the local mission where the assembly prayed for her. She removed her cast, and the ankle was healed. Epstein takes no position on the veracity of this. Aimee told the story in 1918, and Epstein sought no evidence to enable us to judge the event as true or fraudulent.

Semple was sent to China to preach in 1910. He and Aimee sailed to Liverpool, England, where Aimee preached at the Albert Hall. They sailed for China via the Suez Canal and arrived in Hong Kong in June 1910. Aimee found the heat brutal, the food revolting and habits of the Chinese "demonic." Epstein describes her state as "hysteria," sometimes screaming uncontrollably. She and Semple also came down with malaria and dysentery. Semple died on August 17. Aimee gave birth to a daughter, Roberta, on September 17, and six weeks later sailed back to the United States.

Minnie had gained possession of James's farm (to avoid inheritance taxes) and moved to New York City to work for the Salvation Army. Aimee moved back to Chicago and then back to the farm, where Minnie joined her to nurse Aimee and Roberta back to health. Aimee then moved to New York, where she met and married an accountant, Harold McPherson, six months her senior, in February, 1908. The relationship is "shrouded in mystery," and Epstein sheds no light on it. Epstein believes that McPherson was in love with Aimee, but Aimee claimed later that she married out of desperation and loneliness. Epstein suggests that this was a lie since Aimee never did anything that she did not want to do. But Aimee claimed to have lived three years filled with tantrums, real and psychosomatic illness and a nervous breakdown. In March, 1913, in Providence, Aimee gave birth to a son, Rolf, after which she had a post-partum depression. Minnie and McPherson's mother helped the family settle in to a house, and soon Aimee began leading the prayer meetings and services in the Pentecostal churches around Providence.

But Aimee appeared to have another episode of hysteria — neurasthenia, “heart trouble” and stomach hemorrhages. Aimee had several operations, including a hysterectomy (the standard treatment for hysterical women then) and an appendectomy. Her anxiety and depression did not improve, but one night in the hospital, when the staff thought she was near death, Aimee heard the voice of God commanding her to preach. In two weeks she was well, and in the Spring of 1915, she left McPherson to return to Ontario.

The Early Days Of Preaching

Minnie returned to the farm to help with children¹¹, and Aimee began her career as a preacher and healer. Starting in Ontario, and moving to the States, Aimee travelled across the continent holding revival meetings. She drove in an old car (and eventually by train) and trusted to fate to provide sufficient funds for food and gas.

At first, the meetings led to conversions but soon her ability to heal the sick and the lame was demonstrated, and the infirm flocked to her for cures. Between 1917 and 1923 Aimee preached in more than a hundred cities and towns for one night up to more than a month. Epstein remains ambivalent about the healing. He notes that many of the infirmities of the time were psychogenic in nature, especially those cured by Aimee. However, many of the cases are based on accounts provided by Aimee later, and none were subjected to sound scientific study. Nor are there data on what percentage of the infirm were healed. But Aimee’s fame spread as she moved back and forth across the country.

Eventually, McPherson joined her in order to manage her travel and the meetings, and her children joined her too. In June 1917, she started a newsletter, *The Bridal Call*, for 25 cents a year, and she began to incorporate music and drama into her services. Ahead of her time, Aimee also preached to blacks, and many of her meetings were fully integrated. But early in 1918 in Florida, McPherson could no longer tolerate their gypsy life, and Aimee simply drove off and left him. He returned to Providence, and Minnie came down to organize the campaign.¹²

Minnie brought some order to the campaign. She cared for the two children, managed the subscriptions for *The Bridal Call*, and booked the road show. Minnie scheduled the dates for the meetings, prepared the publicity and arranged for auditoriums, music and workers beforehand. Aimee’s first book, *This is That*, appeared in 1919, and the revival meetings in 1919 to 1922 had a mass appeal unequalled to that point in American history (for theater or politics). Minnie’s aims were to protect Aimee from her impulsive decisions and to control her commercial exploitation.

As the years passed, Aimee sought to minimize the healing segments of her ministry. She began to schedule them for the final few days of the stay in a city, and in

¹¹ Rolf soon moved to Providence to be taken care of by McPherson’s mother.

¹² Although they divorced and both remarried, Aimee continued to send McPherson a monthly check.

the 1920s began to eliminate them. Her goal was to convert people, not to cure them of infirmities.

In 1918, Aimee had a vision in which God told her to make a home in Los Angeles and, as Aimee's energy lessened, she and Minnie decided to establish a church of their own. They went to Los Angeles in July, 1921, and found a plot of land near Echo Park. For the next few years, Aimee toured primarily to raise money to build the temple, a temple whose plans changed from a simple wooden tabernacle to a stone temple seating 5,000. Both women worked incredibly hard, sleeping only a few hours each night, and Aimee's insomnia grew worse over the years.

In March 1921, Aimee was officially ordained by the First Baptist Church of San Jose, and McPherson was granted a divorce about the same time. Her revival meetings grew even larger. In 1922 in Denver, she preached to half a million in three weeks, laid hands on and prayed for 3,000 and there were more than 12,000 conversions. On later tours, Minnie and others pre-screened those who requested healing, and only those with cards of approval were admitted for healing.

Aimee preached to the Gypsies, and most converted to her church. As did the local Ku Klux Klan! On June 17, 1922, in Denver, after the revival meeting, Aimee and her assistant were kidnapped by Klansmen and asked to preach to them. A month later, the Klansmen delivered a "bag of money" to her.

Aimee toured Australia in 1922 (but did no healing) and then returned to Los Angeles on New Year's Day in 1923 to dedicate the Angelus Temple. Now that she was settled, she started many projects: sewing circles to prepare materials for poor mothers, finding jobs for released prisoners, a commissary to feed the hungry (which evolved into the largest welfare agency during the Great Depression), nurseries to care for infants, and a prayer tower where people prayed for those who requested it and talked to those who called — one of the first telephone counseling services.

The organ was dedicated in March 1923, and Aimee began to plan for dramatic services to fill the auditorium each night. She used costumes, props, scenery, music and dramatic sermons, often acted out in play form. Aimee recorded canned sermonettes for radio stations and opened her own radio station (KFSG – Kall Four Square Gospel) in February 1924.¹³ Aimee's services had moved to mainstream fundamentalism. The speaking in tongues and healing was now reserved for small groups meeting in a different room after the services. The church began running classes for all groups, from children to potential ministers, and formalized this as the L.I.F.E. Bible College in December 1925.

Crises And Conflicts

¹³ The Four Square Gospel was based on Regeneration, Baptism in the Spirit, Divine Healing and the Second Coming.

The years from 1925 through to Aimee's death in 1944 were full of personal crises and business and interpersonal conflicts. Because of her celebrity, most of these crises and conflicts were fully reported and commented upon in the press. Rival preachers attacked her, people sued her, and all of this appeared in the newspapers.

On the business side, the first major conflict was with Minnie. Minnie at first ran the business side of the Temple. However, from the first there were complaints about her autocratic style. The Santa Anna branch of the movement sued in court in 1925 over the mismanagement of the funds, and the suit dragged on for months before the complainants gave up.

Aimee and Minnie lived with Aimee's children in a parsonage next to the Temple. People dropped by at all times, reporters were allowed in, and strangers even abandoned babies on the doorstep. By 1924, Aimee used to check into the Ambassador Hotel once or twice a week for privacy. She did not have any close friends, although she had many aides and supporters, and she frequently complained that she was lonely.

At the radio station, the engineer was Kenneth Ormiston, and rumors soon had them as lovers despite the fact that Ormiston was married. Ormiston disappeared in January 1926, and his wife filed for divorce. Aimee went on a "vacation" to Europe and the Middle East, where she nevertheless continued to preach, and returned in April 1926. Then on May 18 Aimee went swimming at Ocean Park beach and disappeared. The search for her was unsuccessful, and a memorial service for her was held on June 20. On June 23, Aimee walked in from the desert at Agua Prieta in Mexico, saying she had been kidnapped. The press thought, however, that she had been hiding somewhere with Ormiston. Aimee was not dehydrated or sunburned, her shoes were not scuffed but had grass stains on them. There was no perspiration on her dress. She was wearing a watch that Minnie had given her and which she had not taken to the beach. The house she claimed to have been kept in was never located, nor were her abductors. However, Aimee was called before a grand jury investigating the crime, and in September the district attorney issued warrants against Aimee, her mother and others for corruption of public morals, obstruction of justice and conspiracy to manufacture evidence. They were bound over for trial, but the charges were dismissed in January 1927 because of the lack of credibility of the witnesses for the prosecution. Epstein does not know the truth, and he produces no new evidence for or against Aimee.

In 1927, Aimee changed her style, becoming more fashionable, changes which upset her mother and many members of her congregation. Epstein views these changes as evidence that Aimee was trying to broaden her appeal. When she returned, the conflict with her mother intensified. Aimee persuaded the board of the Temple to take her side, and Minnie stormed out. In August 1927, Minnie resigned and insisted on a 50-50 split of all property of the Echo Park Association, as the enterprise was officially called. Although the exact terms were not disclosed, Epstein estimates that Minnie received about \$100,000 in cash and property.

However, with Aimee in charge, her business manager (a chap called Ralph Jordan) started some harebrained schemes that almost bankrupted the Temple, such as building a hotel for out-of-town visitors and a memorial cemetery for Foursquare members. The money given at the services was taken by Jordan's cronies, lawyers and land speculators. Aimee was misled by her managers (Ralph Jordan, Cromwell Ormsby and A. C. Winters) until Giles Knight restored order, after which her son Rolf took over. In 1935, though, the Temple was still mired in debt and beset by rumors of graft in its operation.

While all the varied lawsuits and investigations were going on, Minnie came back for eight months in 1930 to put some order into the affairs, and Aimee set about composing an oratorio. Minnie's intervention ended with a row about Aimee's lifestyle, morals, theology and choice of advisors. It may have ended with a physical fight – again Epstein is not sure. In August, after the conflict, Aimee had a nervous breakdown. She was still preaching and writing sermons (which, remember, were presented dramatically at the Temple), composing music, writing a new book and taking screen tests for a film of her life. She retreated to a cottage in Malibu with symptoms of insomnia, agitation, acidosis, weight loss and hysterical blindness. As she recovered, she planned for Roberta to take over as pastor and Rolf as manager of the Temple. Aimee never recovered from this illness. She was never again healthy for more than a few months at a time, and she was continually in physical pain and emotional distress.

Roberta and Rolf both married, and this made Aimee even more lonely.¹⁴ She met a singer in one of her productions, David Hutton, in the summer of 1931, and married him in September in Arizona, despite the Fundamentalist prohibition against marrying another while one's former spouse was still alive. A few days after the wedding, a massage nurse sued Hutton for breach of promise. The stress of her work and these conflicts led to another nervous breakdown in March 1932. Aimee took a trip to Central America as part of a rest cure, but she came down with a "tropical fever." She also fell and fractured her skull on her return.¹⁵ Hutton and others were found to have violated city ordinances in their operation of the welfare operations of the Temple. The marriage was over, and Aimee divorced Hutton formally in January 1934.

Roberta divorced her husband and came back to work at the Temple. But in order that Aimee could continue to tour America, she arranged for another female preacher, Rheba Crawford, to take over while she was away and vice versa. The arrangement worked well for a while, but then Roberta (and her grandmother Minnie) uneasily watched Crawford's influence grow, and they were worried by Crawford's attacks on local public officials upon whose support the Temple had relied.

The crisis came in March 1931, when several Temple staff, including the attorney, Crawford and Roberta got Aimee to sign formal contracts to guarantee the

¹⁴ Her father had died in October 1927.

¹⁵ This apparently did not respond to "healing."

positions of the leading staff at fair wages. Aimee signed, perhaps reluctantly, and six months later claimed that she had been coerced.

Aimee appointed Giles Knight to get the finances of the Temple in order, and Knight instituted strict controls on all transactions. The other staff objected to his rules and regulations, and Minnie and Roberta seemed to line up against Knight. With Rolf's support, Aimee and Knight took over the power and disenfranchised the rest. Roberta then sued Aimee's attorney for malicious slander, and so began the break between Aimee and her daughter. At the same time, Crawford sued Aimee for slander. After the first case went to trial, Roberta was awarded \$2000 and costs. Crawford settled out of court. By the beginning of 1939, however, the mortgage and debts were paid off, and the Temple on sound financial footing for the first time.

Aimee seems to have given Knight full powers over the Temple, and he even had power to approve or veto decisions made by Aimee. She surrendered her public and personal life to Knight, for reasons which Epstein fails to discover. She was under virtual house arrest. She could not see even her children without Knight's approval. Rolf was an approved person, but Roberta never saw or talked to her mother again. Aimee was even more lonely now than ever. But Aimee's public image improve dramatically, and even former enemies now praised her.

From 1931 to 1944, Aimee worked for two goals, creation of a tradition of religious theater and leading a growing denomination of Fundamentalists into the 20th Century. She worked tirelessly during the Depression to have her Church help the needy, and she continually had to pursue funding and materials for this. When the Second World War started, Aimee sold war bonds, preached sermons for the Blood Bank, and used her radio station to educate the public about wartime conditions, such as rationing. The Army made Aimee an honorary colonel for her services.

In 1943, when Aimee and Rolf decided that Rolf could take over, Knight departed without resistance or hard feelings. Rolf was installed as head of the Temple management in February 1944.

The End

In the 1940s, Aimee was in considerable physical pain from her afflictions, and the arthritis in her legs was very limiting. She had urethral damage and bladder infections which caused fevers and which had been misdiagnosed and mistreated. Her insomnia was as bad as ever, and she took sedatives to sleep. In 1943 in Mexico, she contracted amoebic dysentery which lowered her red corpuscle count, so that she had blood transfusions regularly for the rest of her life. Her gums and tongue were white, and the tropical fever had perforated her intestine. She was continually dehydrated.

Aimee went to Oakland on September 25, 1944. She seemed in good spirits and preached at the Oakland Auditorium. She announced the topic for the next night and

retired to her hotel room. She had a new bottle of sleeping pills, which bore no pharmacist label, and her regular doctor claimed not to have supplied them. She took many of the pills, and some were found on the floor the next morning. In the morning, she called her physician in Los Angeles, but he was in surgery. She called another physician who referred her to one in Oakland. She did not make that third call. At ten o'clock, Rolf found his mother unconscious. He summoned medical assistance, but she was pronounced dead at 11:45 a.m. on September 27, 1944. She was 53. These details reported by Epstein come from the *Los Angeles Times* report of the death and from correspondence in 1992 from Rolf.

Comments

There are several suicidal warning signs in Aimee's later life.

(1) Aimee was experiencing increasing physical pain toward in the 1940s from her arthritis, the bladder problems and the "tropical diseases" she contracted.

(2) Her loneliness seems to have increased from the 1930s on, partly as a result of her alienation from her mother Minnie and her daughter Roberta. Although Giles Knight put the Temple on a sound financial foundation for the first time, his rules for Aimee (to prevent her impulsive actions and to improve her public image) increased her isolation and resulting loneliness. Her impulsive decision to marry David Hutton in 1931 attests to her desperation in this regard, and during the 1940s she complained to acquaintances of her loneliness.

(3) Aimee had "nervous breakdowns" in 1926 and 1930, and she seems to have suffered from symptoms of conversion disorder, anxiety and depression throughout her adult life.

(4) Throughout her life, adolescent and adult, she seems to have been searching for a system of values to live by. Choosing Christianity, after a brief fling with Darwinism in adolescence, she changed sects several times, from Pentecostal, to Baptist, to her own form of Fundamentalism (the Foursquare Gospel). The large audiences she preached to in her tours and home at the Temple gave her support for these beliefs. Her life, however, did not follow these beliefs. For example, she married while McPherson was still alive, and she probably had an affair during her "kidnapping" in 1926.

(5) Aimee had been taking sedatives for a long time, and she was used to the procedure. Although the sedative that killed her was "new," there is no reason to assume that she could not have prevented an accidental overdose. Epstein unfortunately fails to produce any facts on the circumstances of her death. He did not find out what the sedative was (apart from being a barbiturate), who prescribed it or how long she had been taking it. He did not check on the telephone calls that Aimee supposedly made on the morning of her death, relying on a newspaper report despite the fact that he argues

throughout his biography that the newspapers were often incorrect in the “facts” they reported about Aimee’s life.

So what can we conclude? It looks like suicide, and the coroner’s verdict doesn’t have much relevance for or against. It is what a coroner probably would have concluded, regardless of the facts, in the 1940s. Could it have been drug automatism? Possibly except for the unverified telephone calls to physicians on the morning of her death. Since I have never come across a well-documented case of drug automatism in the literature in the last 50 years, I do not think her death is such a case.

So suicide it is.

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DOLLY WILDE

David Lester

Dolly Wilde was the niece of Oscar Wilde. She attempted suicide four times during her life and died in “suspicious” circumstances, possibly a suicide. Schenkar (2000) has written, not so much an autobiography, for there is not a lot known about the details of Dolly’s life, but rather a memoir.

Dolly was a socialite. She never worked, except for occasional translations for which she was only sometimes paid. She moved from London to Paris and back, staying in hotels or in her friends’ houses. She was a lesbian, with one long-term lover, Natalie Barney, and many affairs. She was an alcoholic and heroin addict. But, most of all, she was witty guest, a sparkling conversationalist. She was, says Schenkar, a beautiful loser, someone who squandered her gifts and opportunities.

Birth And Youth

Dolly was born on July 11, 1895, three months after Oscar’s trial and imprisonment, to Oscar’s older brother Willie and his second wife, Sophie (Lily) Lees (born in Dublin in 1859). (Willie’s first marriage, to an American newspaper publisher, Florence Leslie, lasted only six months.)

Willie, born in 1852 in Ireland to a knighted surgeon and a poet mother (both of whom were prone to depression), was an alcoholic whose career as a journalist went downhill because of his alcoholism.¹⁶ He and Lily married in 1894 and lived with Willie’s mother, Lady Jane Wilde, at her rented place in London. They were not well-off financially and depended on Oscar for funds. (Oscar paid for Lily’s lying-in fee from his prison cell.)

Willie was usually drunk, frequently depressed, idle and often destructive. He had numerous affairs. Dolly’s early life was chaotic. Lady Jane Wilde died in 1896. At nine months Dolly was sick, and so her parents abandoned her. She was put out to nurse and returned when she was three. Willie died when she was four, and she was then placed in a convent (probably as a foster home) and supported by one of Lily’s sisters for a while. After Oscar’s imprisonment and Willie’s death, the family was quite poor and in disgrace because of Oscar’s imprisonment. After Willie’s death, Lily married Alexander Teixeira de Mattos, a hard worker, and life became more stable. When Lily died in 1922 (at the age of 62), she left Dolly a small inheritance of about 2,000 pounds.

Dolly’s adolescence remains a mystery. She never spoke of it, and no details remain. But.....

¹⁶ He worked as drama critic for *Punch* and *Vanity Fair* and as a leader writer for both the *World* and the *Daily Telegraph*.

The Move To France

in 1914, Dolly set off for France to work as an ambulance driver in the First World War, along with many other adventurous women. Once there, she shared an apartment in Montparnasse with four other female ambulance drivers and got involved in affairs with other young women.¹⁷ Dolly perhaps rose to be a lieutenant and may have been awarded a medal for her services, perhaps the Croix de Guerre.

After her mother's death in 1922, Dolly took a small flat in London's Mayfair district which she hardly ever stayed in. She preferred to stay with friends and lovers around Europe ("...the borrowed residences, hotel bedrooms, villas, and the guest apartments of her friends and lovers." p. 99).

Dolly met Natalie Barney on June 28, 1927, when she was thirty-one. Natalie, a rich American born in 1876 in Dayton, Ohio, ran one of the most famous salons in Paris. As a lesbian,¹⁸ she encouraged women artists and writers, but she also included men in her gatherings. Natalie was taken with Dolly that day, and Dolly soon became her second-best lover (Romaine Brooks was the favorite) and the star of her salon.

Dolly's relationship with Natalie was a source of stress. She often had to be packed off to other venues when Romaine Brooks felt acutely threatened by her presence, and both Natalie and Dolly had numerous affairs.

Back in London, Dolly had a good friend in Honey Harris whose family provided a respite for her. Dolly was continually in financial straits, and both Natalie and Honey helped her out. After Dolly's death, it was Honey who arranged the double grave and designed the marker, and Natalie who produced a book of reminiscences to commemorate her.¹⁹

Dolly's Pathologies

Dolly perhaps had an inherited manic-depressive disorder. She was often depressed and frequently melancholic. Her life was that of both a "vividly social woman and a recluse in depressed or determined self-exile" (p. 123). Dolly was a morphine addict by 1928 and, in the 1930s, Dolly's consumption of alcohol increased. She was seen using cocaine and heroin, even occasionally injecting heroin at the dinner table in front of the other guests. She was described as "wilful, heedless, impulsive, episodic, and intermittent" (p. 234).

Dolly made four suicide attempts: in 1931 after Natalie eloped with an actress, whereupon Dolly slashed her wrist in the Hotel Astoria (in Paris); in 1933 at the same

¹⁷ Although a lesbian, Dolly attracted men and was described by at least one as a "cock-tease."

¹⁸ Natalie recorded 27 lovers, but her housekeeper calculated that she had forty major affairs and hundreds of minor affairs.

¹⁹ Tancred Borenius, a professor at the Slade and the executor of her mother's will, took care of Dolly too.

hotel where she swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills; in London in March 1934 with a sleeping medication; and at her flat in London in September 1934 where she took an overdose and slashed her wrists (and was saved by her housekeeper).

In 1936, after her furniture had been repossessed, she sought treatment in London for her depression. She began to make frequent stays in various sanatoriums. Trying to wean her off heroin, her doctors introduced her to paraldehyde, to which she also became addicted.

Dolly suffered from many physical illnesses – infections, styes and chalazions in her eyes, high fevers, fluid in her lungs, influenza, throat abscesses, rashes, and diphtheria. When she died, a fibroid tumor was found in her uterus. She consulted doctors, Christian Science practitioners, and healers of various kinds (even going to Lourdes). Finally, in the late 1930s, she developed breast cancer. Although she saw many doctors about this, she did not in fact undergo any treatment for it whatsoever, but it did increase her dependence on alcohol and drugs. Perhaps menopause complicated her medical problems.

The Day Of Death And Its Cause

On April 10, 1941, Dolly's chambermaid found Dolly dead in bed in her flat in Belgravia, London. By her bed were a glass and an empty bottle of paraldehyde, an over-the-counter sleeping medication which she had been taken under doctor's orders for two years to ameliorate her insomnia. There was also a hypodermic needle in the room with a trace of heroin in it.

The autopsy showed that Dolly's cancer had spread to her lungs. But the pathologist could not find enough traces of medication or drugs to have killed her, although the findings were consistent with an overdose of a narcotic drug. Suicide was still illegal in England, and so perhaps the coroner was swayed by this consideration in declaring her death to be from "causes unascertainable." Dying at the same age as her father and her uncle, Dolly was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery beside her mother.

Reference

Schenkar, J. (2000). *Truly Wilde*. New York: Basic Books.