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Montague Ullman: The Recovering Psychoanalyst

A flabbergasted Montague Ullman was given a standing ovation as he stepped onto the stage. True to form, he was too modest to expect he would be getting a Lifetime Achievement Award, in 2006, from the International Association for the Study of Dreams. His joy was further sweetened by the recognition of what he believed to be his most accomplished article, *The Dream: In Search of a New Abode*. Monte loved the article because it was a theoretical contribution extrapolated from physicist David Bohm's ideas about implicate and explicate orders that would put dreaming consciousness into a whole new frame of reference. Monte devoted the last few years of his life to exploring the relationship between quantum physics and dreaming consciousness in an effort to further the connection of the human species.

Montague Ullman was essentially shy and unpretentious. Despite the fact that he downplayed his accomplishments, his faith in the healing potential of dreams inspired a worldwide community that has become dedicated to teaching his group process. He worked so vigorously that, even into his ninetieth year, he failed to grasp the enormity of his contributions.

A brilliant scholar, Monte had no idea the extent to which his peers, many of them international giants in their fields, considered him to be a guiding force in their lives. He simply thought that he had a mission to accomplish and set about doing just that. That mission, through dreamwork and parapsychology, was to promote what he

liked to call “species connectedness.” He accomplished this internationally and interpersonally.

With a natural ability to put people at ease, Monte was able to bring out their authenticity. When he conducted dream groups, he was able to take a dreamer to yet undiscovered aspects of his or her psyche, yielding a movement away from invalid, long-standing perceptions. It was Monte’s gentle nature and lightheartedness combined with the wisdom of a shaman that allowed people to let down their defenses and break with old, unhealthy patterns. Monte savored these “eureka” experiences with his dreamers.

There was an uncommon and beautiful duality to Monte’s personality. On the one hand, he was a gifted clinician with a keenly scientific mind. He continually challenged himself to produce the evidence that dreams are as important a part of the mammalian organism as is the heart, the brain, or the lungs. His belief that waking consciousness and dreaming consciousness are not only interconnected but also interdependent became an integral part of his approach.

On the other hand, Monte was a mystic. He never set out to be one, nor did he think of himself as one. But at the age of sixteen, he and a few other teenaged boys participated in ongoing séances, which, to their shock and elation, resulted in dramatic demonstrations of telekinesis and communication with an incarnate being they came to know as Dr. Bindelof. Although Monte became a noted parapsychologist, he did not reveal his first-hand experiences with these inexplicable phenomena until much later in his life. He was concerned that his credibility as a

distinguished psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and neurologist would suffer if he shared this life-altering chapter from his boyhood.

Raised in and around frenetically paced Manhattan, Monte spent the latter years of his life in a home that he referred to as his tree house in the village of Ardsley, New York. When he and his wife, Janet, moved there over 60 years before, he loved the feel of living in this quaint, pristine community of a few hundred people. By the year 2000 the population had grown to nearly 4,300. Although the town was very small by a city dweller's standards, Monte was appalled at what he perceived as the transformation of this charming hamlet into a booming metropolis. He had lived there so long he had forgotten about what it was like living in the concrete jungle of New York City.

Monte's custom built home, completed in 1950, had the feel of a mountain retreat. His house and twelve other similarly built houses were the brainstorm of seven architects and designers. In 1946 a group of professionals, including Monte and two other psychoanalysts, decided to form a cooperative with the purpose of building affordable homes in an ideal environment for growing, young families^{1, 2}. After an extensive search, the group found a piece of land that was to be subdivided equally into thirteen properties. The homes were built far enough apart from each other to enhance the sense of privacy and to maintain its country-like ambience. The land, located in a densely wooded area, came to be known as Twenty-One Acres, signifying the total size of the purchased land. Though seemingly out in the wilderness, the homes were within walking distance to the quaint village of Ardsley

and to the railway station. Monte took pride in pointing out the parts of the brick patio he had laid by hand.

Towering oak trees and wild animals shared the Ullman homestead. Monte loved all of the animals and considered them a part of his family, albeit nuisances as some of the critters could be. He felt responsible for their welfare and so he fed them. He gave two of his regularly visiting squirrels names: “Morris” and “Pippy.” Monte, ever the sentimentalist, grieved when Pippy died and then cheered Morris on when he showed up with a new mate.

Monte loved to tell animal stories. Once, a package of food meant to be a gift for his birthday was left at his front door. The package was shut tightly with an ostensibly raccoon-proof latch. Monte was mortified when one furry little thief foraged her way through the rubber cover and ate the gourmet treat. Monte had to settle for leftovers on his birthday while the raccoon feasted happily. Deer were regular visitors to the Ullman home also, but, as it turned out, they were more polite and restrained than the raccoons.

Janet loved cats and the Ullman’s were always caring for several at a time. The “Daisy the Cat” story was Monte’s oft repeated, most dramatic, and favorite animal tale. Janet’s father, whom everyone knew as Zaideh, had been living out his final years with the Ullmans in Ardsley. On his regular walks, although never straying too far from the house, Zaideh would often be accompanied by Daisy, the Ullman pet at that time. One day, Daisy rushed into the house, meowing frantically. Janet assumed that the kitty was just hungry, but this couldn’t be true because she wouldn’t eat. Daisy continued to whine and seemed to be trying to lure Janet outside.

Janet finally followed Daisy to a wooded area, where her father lay unconscious on the ground. He was taken to the hospital and survived what may have been a fatal spill, thanks to his small companion.

Monte might be thought of as having been slightly eccentric. This became apparent as soon as you set foot into his home. The entire rambler was covered, wall to wall, with books, papers, pictures, and art objects, most of them created by his two of his children, Sue and Bill. The black baby grand in the living room, which, in her early years Janet taught students on, became part of Monte's elaborate filing system. The piano was blanketed by unfinished books and journal articles. It was easy to get lost in his library, for his entire house was a treasure trove of books on dreams, the paranormal, neurology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, theology, quantum physics, politics, and still more. Monte's interests encompassed all of science.

Monte's library was an international and spiritual Mecca for passionate seekers of knowledge. It was easy to tell which books Monte had referenced, for peeking between the pages were his handmade manila bookmarks. Being in his living room might have reminded you of expansive collections you'd find in the old world atmosphere of a university library, including that familiar used books' smell. Upon careful inspection, it was clear that each book's placement was diligently considered. And although all rooms in the house were filled with his work, amazingly, he knew exactly where everything was—from the book he was currently working on down to the last post-it-note.

The house, surrounded by woods, did not permit much light in the living room, the gathering place for visitors. During workshops and dream groups, which

he led in this room, a standing lamp next to Monte's chair would illuminate his face as he shuffled his papers that outlined the day's schedule. One could not help but notice a contrast between this darkened room and the warmth Monte exuded as he ramped up for the day. The well-worn, circa 1960s, dark brown sofa under a massive bookshelf snugly seated six or seven people. Chairs for the rest of the group completed the circle of visitors. After over forty years of working with dreams in a group format, one might marvel at how many dreams must have been explored and appreciated within this close-knit community of dreamers. A gracious host, Monte made sure there were plenty of crunchy goodies on the table in the center, so that no one would need to go hungry. There was always a wide variety of tea bags and a fresh pot of coffee brewing. Monte wouldn't have thought of having people over without food perpetually available.

Monte was fair-skinned, of medium height, and willowy. You probably wouldn't describe him as an especially handsome man. His long and prominent, slightly bent nose didn't detract from his wildly bushy eyebrows. In his later years, he let his lovely white hair grow long enough to sport a pony tail, giving him the look of a 19th century French poet hanging around the left bank in Paris, one of his favorite places.

Monte's twinkling hazel-sometimes-green eyes gave away his joie de vivre and more than a hint of mischief. Mostly, his eyes betrayed a sea of kindness. In the final years of his life, his gait was sometimes precarious and his posture slouched. But when he conducted his dream groups and workshops, he became so impassioned that he suddenly stood erect and walked briskly. It was as though Monte's work was

his life force, instantaneously transforming him into a young man that had much to say, to do, and to think about.

On Day One of each of his dream group training sessions, Monte would give a talk about a current event, often encompassing politics. This talk was his warm-up, so to speak. His process was predictable. He would shuffle and rearrange the papers he had made his notes on, not unlike one might see with an absentminded professor. But two minutes later, a metamorphosis occurred. Monte slid to the edge of his comfortable chair. This was signal he was ready to talk. And, for over an hour, he was so ebullient that he would barely take a breath. Of course, he allowed for questions and dialogue, but for the most part, he articulated his thoughts with great passion, wanting to make sure no details were left out. There was no loftiness to his language, despite his obvious brilliant mind. He wasn't trying to impress anyone. His tasks were to teach and provoke deep thought.

Monte's talks would inevitably lead to an exchange about the healing potential of dreams. He firmly believed that all of us have an "incorruptible core of being," that is, even in the most sinister of people there lies a purity of heart and soul. He would remind us that dreams tell us exactly what we should pay attention to in our current lives. He'd reflect upon the fact that our world wouldn't be in the sad state it finds itself in today if only we would pay heed to our inner dialogue. Monte's joy was to watch people break free of beliefs that created suffering when they did listen to their inner guides. Without fail, at the end of each of his weekend trainings, Monte would announce that this dream group experience was the very best one he'd

taken part in. Dream groups only got better for him and there was never a dull moment from start to finish.

Monte loved to laugh and to poke fun at himself. For those people who met him for the first time, he would introduce himself as a “recovering psychoanalyst.” He had spent many years interpreting dreams with his patients “on the couch.” It was in his fiftieth year that he “found his bliss.” He had made a final break away from his psychoanalytic practice, as the overseer of his patients’ psyches. He truly believed that each person is the guardian of his or her inner process. And, since all of us are the artists who create our dreams, he realized that we are the ultimate authority on their messages. From that time on, he eschewed the term “dream interpretation” and instead he embraced Karen Horney’s phrase, “dream appreciation,” to emphasize the potential for discovery of new layers of meaning.

As a teacher and mentor, Monte was everything a student and friend could ask for. But his ability to balance family life with his work was often at the expense of a lack of constancy at home. When he was a young psychiatrist, he left early in the morning and often didn’t arrive back at home until late at night. Because of this, Janet raised the children almost as a single parent would. The oldest two, Susan and Bill, remember only sporadic times spent with their father. Consequently, neither Susan nor Bill had memories of the acceptance and closeness with Monte that the youngest child, Lucy, easily recalled. By the time Lucy was born, Monte spent significantly more time at home than he had in the early years of his work. Even as adults, Susan and Bill were ambivalent about their relationships with their father. They revered him for his accomplishments but also lamented the times that they

might have spent with him had he been less impassioned about his work. True to form, Monte readily admitted his regret in spending so little time with Sue and Bill when they were young. He did his best in later years to make up for that lost time with his children.

The following biographical article detailing Monte's life through his World War II days has been taken from interviews I conducted with Monte, his family, colleagues, friends, and Judy Gardiner, with whom he spent many joyful moments during the last years of his life. Extensive archival research was also conducted. The last interview took place in March 2008, only three months before his death. At nearly ninety-two, Monte's recollection of details was remarkably keen. The impressions I have cultivated are, admittedly, my projections that have come with many hours of careful contemplation. My perceptions are not to be taken as direct quotes, except where I have used quotation marks. This is an early life account of a beloved, extraordinary man, Montague Ullman.

Chapter One: Boyhood

William and Nettie Ullman welcomed their first born, Montague, on September 9, 1916. World War I was being waged, with President Wilson certain to win his second term in office. The Suffrage movement was gaining force, but women weren't yet allowed to vote.



Figure 1: Monte at 7½ months

The Ullmans were the typical, middle class, New York, Jewish, Republican family. They took their Jewish-ness seriously enough to require that the family attend services at their synagogue occasionally during the year—but without fail, during the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Although he wasn't particularly invested in being a Jew, Monte dutifully did what was required of him: going to Hebrew school and having his bar mitzvah at the age of thirteen. Monte's two main memories of this sacred day were getting a fountain pen and being able to be called "a man."

First generation Americans with roots in Hungary and Poland, William and his brother Max were partners in the family business, Ullman Brothers, which manufactured overcoats and hats. William was frequently on the road promoting the business, so Monte didn't see much of him, albeit considerably more than his two younger siblings did. Monte's relationship with his father was one that didn't involve activities like playing ball—they didn't even go to a single baseball game together. Yet Monte was, as were his brother and sister, secure in his father's love. William wanted happiness for his children, throughout their lives. Monte once commented, "My father was brought up in a paternally dominated family. He was very kind to me. He anticipated the kind of person I was going to become. He fed me books according to the time of my life, like Tom Swift and his Inventions, and Rover Boys. . . . He used to get me books as fast as I could read them." Seeing creative potential in his son, William encouraged Monte not only to read, but also to write stories. At the age of twelve, Monte had already written his first mystery, titled "Murder on the SS El Dorado."

When asked what traits he shared in common with his father, Monte said, “My father was creative in his own way. He was in the clothing business but I remember on occasion, we would sit down in the evening after everybody else went to bed and he would [contemplate out loud] interesting names to [give] a certain cloth that they were going to use for manufacturing the overcoats, [the] kind of name that might attract people. So he would come up with possibilities, and he would encourage me to try to think of an interesting name. He had a creative streak in him and if I have any creativity I think that’s where it came from.” I wondered to myself what he meant by “if I have any creativity. . .” This is the same person that came up with the dream group format used here and in many countries overseas!

Monte’s most frequent outings with his father were at the top floor of the exclusive Hotel Pennsylvania. Here, William and the other members of the Associated Traveling Salesmen of America had their regular sales meetings. The barber shop in the basement of the hotel was where father and son did their ritual of getting haircuts together. Typically, when William was done with his haircut, he would play poker with colleagues, while he had assigned Monte the task of writing a story. On one particular Sunday, Monte noticed how the barber, a young, handsome, German émigré, appeared smitten by a beautiful blond manicurist there. Seeing the sparks fly between the two, Monte was thus inspired to write “The Blond Blaze.” These trips to the hotel were the special outings Monte had with his father and he cherished all of them.

Later in life, William cheered Monte on for his enthusiastic decision to become a doctor. Sadly, William died before he would have seen Monte graduate from medical school, but Monte knew that he'd have been proud.

William saw that his youngest child, Bob, was drawn to the theater from a very early age. Every time William came home from a theater production, he would place the playbill on Bob's nightstand, where Bob would find it upon awakening. William, who himself loved theater, encouraged Bob to immerse himself in it. Bob took to theater like a fish to water. As he did with Monte, William encouraged Bob to follow his heart.

As the baby of the family, Bob readily admitted to being a spoiled child. He lived at home, with his mother's blessings, until he was 27 years old, 14 years after William had died. In spite of his late start, Bob, who credits his father for his good natured but slightly naughty sense of humor, was to become a successful and highly respected off Broadway press agent for 45 years.

William had an enormous appetite and, as a result, was obese. He'd awaken at six in the morning, have a big breakfast at a local restaurant, work all day, and when he wasn't traveling and promoting the business, he would come home and have a big supper or go out to dinner and a Broadway show with prospective customers. On Friday nights, he would bring home actors and other celebrities. Monte remembered Big Band leader Paul Whiteman as one of his father's honored guests. Nettie unfailingly cooked a wonderful Shabbos dinner with or without guests.

William had lived his life in the fast lane. If he wasn't smoking Home Run cigarettes, in those days the strongest cigarettes available, he was enjoying one of his

twelve cigars per day. Although rarely drunk, it was obvious that he liked his liquor, too. William loved the horse races and went to them regularly. He attended the Kentucky Derby so religiously that one year the Governor of Kentucky presented him with a plaque designating him as an honorary “Kentucky Colonel.”



Figure 2: Monte's father William Ullman

Nettie and William were married for 20 years, a long marriage in that era. Though she loved him deeply, Nettie was wary of her husband's explosive temper. It was not infrequently that she'd warn the children, "here comes the crazy Hungarian," as he made his way into the house. She took the brunt of William's yelling and door slamming so that the children didn't have to.

Nettie was a devoted wife and mother, but she could be high strung and, as Monte put it, "a little hysterical" at times. Once, when Monte ran home with a gash on his forehead after falling from the tree he was climbing, Nettie took one look at him and delivered a bloodcurdling shriek. Judging by his mother's reaction, Monte thought that he was on the brink of death and would not look in the mirror for fear he would see his head split in half. Nettie called a taxi and sped her son to the doctor's office. The doctor, assuring Nettie that the injury was not fatal, put a Band-Aid on Monte's head and sent them on their way back home.

Monte intuitively knew that his father wanted the best for him. But he lacked that same confidence when it came to his mother. She was more focused on "keeping up with the Joneses." Nettie placed importance on material wealth and prestige. Monte's view was that his mother treated him more like an object than a living, breathing child. She used to say to her friends, "He's such a good boy." Monte had the feeling that this was the unspoken implication of what a *good mother* she was. Nettie's children were an extension of herself, an invisible umbilical cord ever-palpable to each of them. Therefore getting high grades in school and having a lucrative career reflected her standing in the community. Monte's choice of being a medical doctor and, even more impressive, a specialist in neurology and psychiatry,

seemed to Nettie to be a testament to her accomplishments as a mother. A discrepancy seemed to exist between her public face and on how she viewed her children and herself privately. Monte came out of his childhood “with a sense that being loved [by my mother] was directly proportional to my scholastic accomplishments.” He added, “this left me with a fragile ego and a limited emotional range which was kept in check by what in the trade is known as detachment.”⁸ Luckily, Monte was self driven and required almost no prodding to keep up with his studies. And when he decided to choose medicine as a career, Nettie was delirious with joy and an abundance of “naches” (Yiddish for joy and gratification) with which to brag to friends and relatives.

Monte’s parents were not alone in extolling his achievements. Jean, who was three years younger, viewed him as being incapable of doing any wrong. Although she described herself as “not as smart, or as neat or as interested in serious things as he was,” Jean saw her older brother as a marvelous example of something to strive for. She idolized him.

In 1935, Monte, at 18, became the man of the house when his father, at age 44, died of a massive heart attack. Because their father died so young, Jean saw Monte as a surrogate father who guided her through her adolescence and even into her adult years. Jean once commented that she didn’t think she would have survived without Monte’s emotional and financial support after her beloved husband, George Blake, died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of thirty eight. Remarkably, Jean died eight hours before Monte took his last breath on June 7th, 2008.

Bob, the youngest of the three Ullman children, also idolized Monte. Since Bob was only thirteen when his father died, he thought of Monte, actually only six years older, more as a father figure than as a big brother. Bob admired everything Monte did, which included playing the piano for hours at a time, constantly listening to classical music, and being aware of all that was going on in the world. When Bob was sick, rather than turning to their mother, he went to Monte, who would care for him and refer him to a doctor, if needed.

The one adult in his family from whom Monte felt unconditional love was his paternal grandmother, Katie Ullman. Grandma Katie always called Monte by his Jewish name, Mendel. She loved to spoil him and would often give in when Monte begged her to buy him a toy. He never forgot the red fire engine she once got for him.

Grandma and Monte spent many a day playing rummy and visiting with Katie's daughter, Dora, who, during the summer months, lived in Bradley Beach, a popular resort in New Jersey. Monte also admired and loved Katie's son, Marty, describing him as "the one that was a little offbeat" Marty was an industrial artist who made quite a success in the family. Monte believed that Marty had a genuine, father-like, interest in him. He remembered how thrilled he felt when Marty took him to the movies and out for meals. After Monte married Janet, he and Marty continued with what became their special rituals.

Monte's favorite outing with Grandma was when she treated him to a Vaudeville show. Before the curtain came up and when the orchestra played the overture, Monte, by then nearly nine years old, made it clear to Katie that he hated

that part of the show. Unable to contain his excitement, he would nudge his grandmother every few seconds and say, “When is the noise going to be over? I want to see the Vaudeville!” Grandma would put her fingers to her lips and whisper sternly, “Shush, Mendel, shush!” to no avail. It wasn’t until the Vaudeville show started that Monte stayed quiet and watched in awe.

Katie was quite a woman. When she died on December 31st, 1936, six obituary postings were listed in the New York Times. A humanitarian, Katie was honored by the United Ladies’ Aid Society, Sadie Koenig Aid, and the Mary Ullman Ladies Aid Society, where, earlier, she had been president. The employees of Ullman Brothers mourned her sudden loss. Katie, and her husband (Monte’s grandfather), Samuel, raised six children. William died a year earlier than Katie.

Monte called his maternal grandmother and grandfather Bubbeh and Zaideh, respectively. Unlike his father’s side of the family, who were middle class and upwardly mobile, Bubbeh and Zaideh were poor immigrants from Poland. Neither of them spoke English and Monte never thought of them as anything but old people who had endured hard lives. Monte, always the child that wanted to please, would eat cookies that Bubbeh made, even though, he said, they practically broke his teeth when he bit into them!

Bubbeh and Zaideh lived with the Ullman’s during Monte’s childhood. Since the only language they spoke was Yiddish, Nettie repeatedly warned Zaideh to not answer the telephone. And time and again, despite Nettie’s demand, Zaideh would answer the phone. Since he could not understand what the caller was saying, he would yell into the phone, “schreibe [write a] postcard!”

Chapter Two: Adolescence

Monte once said he did not think of himself as a genius, but acquiesced to “maybe a little on the bright side.” He went to kindergarten at a public school in the Bronx. Because the school was so crowded, the above average children were accelerated. Monte, along with several of his classmates, was one of those children who made it through grade school in only four years. He skipped another two years in junior high and, in 1929 and the age of 12 ½, got into Townsend Harris Hall, a top-notch high school on the campus of City College of New York (CCNY). After three years and at only fourteen years old, Monte graduated from Harris. In spite of his youth, he was accepted into an elite group of students. He worked hard and excelled, knowing that having the best grades and socializing with students from high society families was what made his mother proudest. Townsend, then an all boys’ school, produced Nobel Laureates, including mathematician Herbert A. Hauptman; Pulitzer Prize winners, including Ira Gershwin and Herman Wouk; recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Jonas Salk and Eugene Lang; not to mention, actors like Edward G. Robinson; and politicians, like Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.³ It seems that Monte was born with a great wit, as even at fourteen, his high school yearbook’s brief write up said the following: “This Montague thinks a ‘Capulet’ is a small cap.”

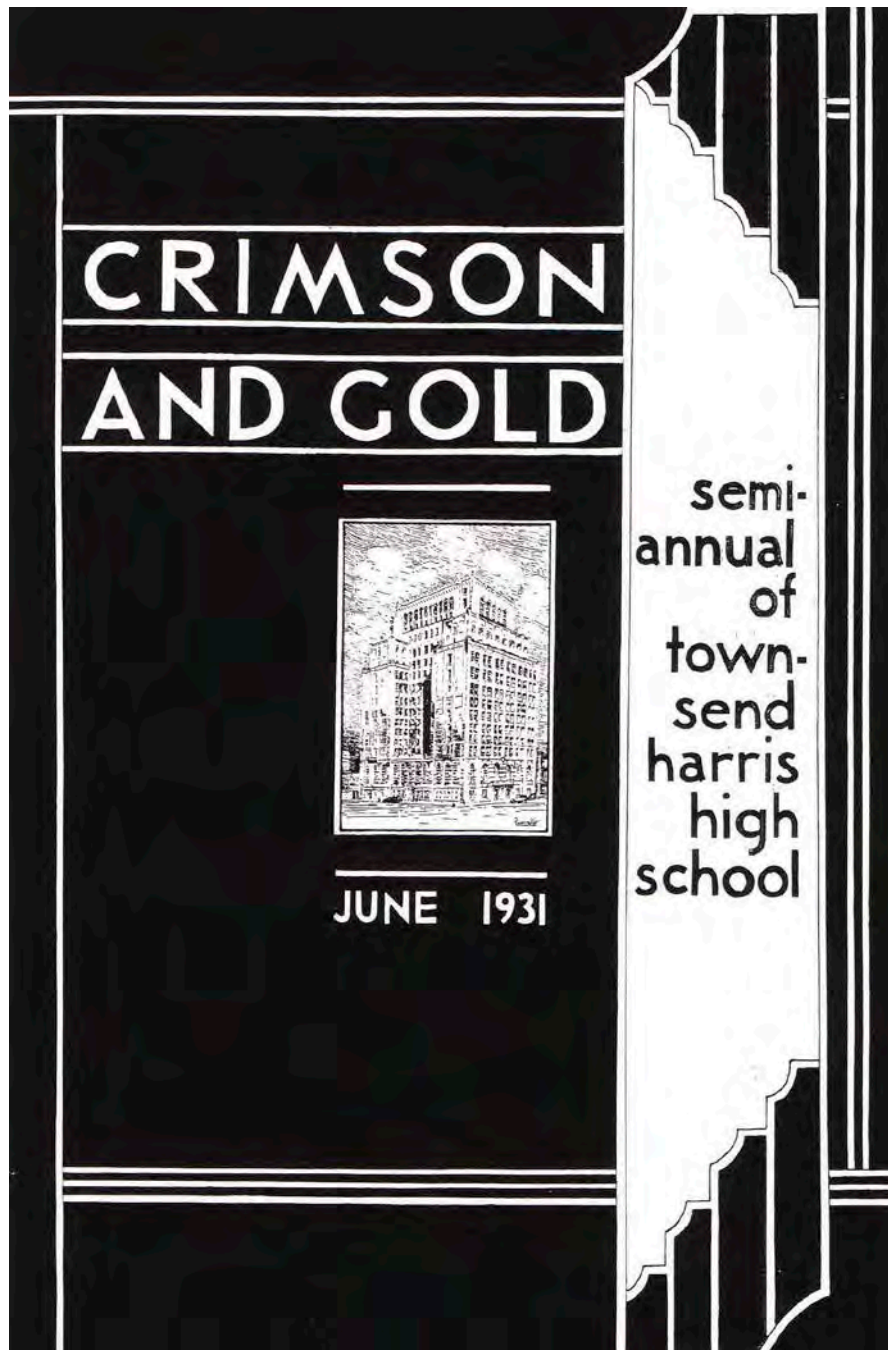


Figure 3: Townsend Harris High School Crimson and Gold Yearbook 1931



Figure 4: Townsend Harris High School Crimson and Gold Yearbook 1931

SENIORS . . .

SCHNEIDER, ROBERT	C.C.N.Y.	SLUTSKY, ABRAHAM	C.C.N.Y.
The path of Folly leads but to the Juggle. Class Council; Class Baseball; French Club; C.H.S.; Math Club; Section Activities.		He may win a loving cup some day, but not for tennis. Arista; Cap. Var. Tennis; Class Service Pin; Org. Ed. C. & G.; Tennis Team (3); Vice- Pres. Class; G.O. Rep. Class; Pros. French Club; French Team; Vice-Pres. French Club; 1st Year French Prize; Class Tennis Team; Class Paper; Section Activities.	
SCHWARTZ, LOUIS	C.C.N.Y.	SPINRAD, LEONARD	C.C.N.Y.
The big food supply man.—He's going to carry around a sandwich sign. Class Paper; Law & Deb.; Stamp and Coin; Aero Club; Science Club; C. & G. Rep.; Var. Show Rep.; Section Activities.		The "World" folded up when he began winning "Biggest News" prizes. 1st Prize "Biggest News"; C.H.S.; Hatikvah Society; Section Activities.	
SCHWARTZ, PAUL	C.C.N.Y.	SPITZBART, ABRAHAM	C.C.N.Y.
He ought to be a bookkeeper—we'd like to get a few of ours back. Class Service Pin; Class Coun.; Class Paper; Arista Committee; Pres. Science Club; Treas. Science Club; Information Bureau; Section Activities.		"Cremo" had a phrase for it. Arista; Pres. Math Club; Math Club; Captain Math Team; German Club; Club Council; Classical Society.	
SHEDD, HERMAN	C.C.N.Y.	STEINACH, EDWIN	C.C.N.Y.
In soccer, he sheds kicks in the shins like a duck sheds water. Captain Varsity Soccer (2); Soccer (4); Ath- letic Rep. G.O.; Class Soccer (3); Section Activities.		Darkness here and nothing more. Math Club ; Art Soc.; French Club.	
SHPETNER, FRED	C.C.N.Y.	STERN, I. ARTHUR	C.C.N.Y.
Shpet is a horrid word. Freshman Swimming; Var. Swim.; Stamp and Coin Club; German Club.		Now if he had a bow with that stern he'd have a boat. G.O. Rep.; T.D. (5); Lieut. T.D.; Orchestra; Class Council; Ass't Capt. Track Team; Class Numerals; Swim. Team; Pub. Mgr. Law & Deb.; Section Activities.	
SIEGEL, ABRAHAM	N.Y.U.	ULLMAN, MONTAGUE	Columbia
Mum's the word—even his name is locked up. Secretary Math Club; Treas. Math Club; Vice- Pres. Classical Society; French Club; Section Activities.		This "Montague" thinks a "Capulet" is a small cap. Orchestra (3); Science Club; Hatikvah Society; Chess and Checker Club; Section Activities.	
SIEGEL, DOUGLAS	C.C.N.Y.	WARNER, GILBERT	N.Y.U.
When there's nothing more to be said, he says it. Issue Ed. Stad.; Ed. Board Stad.; Vice-Pres. Arts & Letters; Vice-Pres. Science Club; Sec.-Treas. Science Club; Class Paper; C. & G. Sales; Section Activities.		Better a "warner" than a squealer. French Club; Aero Club; Spanish Club; Sec- tion Activities.	
SILVER, MARTIN	C.C.N.Y.	WECHSLER, JAMES	Columbia
Silence is golden. He's silver. C. & G. Rep.; Section Activities.		"You Can't Print That" . . . \$0.65. by James A. Wechsler (with apologies to Gilbert Seldes) Vice-Leader Arista; Man. Ed. C. & G.; Vice- Pres. G.O.; Capt. Var. Deb.; Issue Ed. Stad.; Winner "Times Oratorical Contest" (2); Class & School Service Pins; President Class (2); Asso. Ed. Stad.; Class Council (2); Publica- tions Council; Vice-Pres. Inter-Scholastic Deb.; Sec'y Law & Deb.; Capt. Class Deb.; Class Numerals; Editor Class Paper.	

Figure 5: Townsend Harris High School Crimson and Gold Yearbook 1931

Many years later, Monte wrote (an undated letter) to the editor of the Townsend Alumni Magazine, and shared some memories from his time there as a student:

“Sometime in the first week or two that I was there I happened to come late to my first class. I was told by the instructor I had to go to the office and come back with a pink slip. Being a very obedient child and with a sense that I was in some kind of trouble, I did just that. I was met by the office manager, a tall, slender, light-haired woman who quite impassively handed me a pink card and instructed me to fill it out. After filling out my name, date and what class I missed, there was one blank space for Comment [sic] that puzzled me. I had no idea what I was to comment about. I fidgeted about for a while and finally found the courage to approach Miss Authority. She very casually told me to write “cut”. This was in no way helpful to me. I went back to my seat and carefully began examining my various bodily parts looking for any evidence of bleeding. I was an immature 12 ½ [sic].

“The next episode occurred on the day of the graduation exercises. My parents were there along with a friend of my father who was also a physician and the one who influenced my choice of medicine. Prior to the graduation there was a call for someone to play a piano piece at the graduation. There were two of us who volunteered. One was a boy with true musical ability who I knew in my heart was better than me. I was tone deaf but had technically mastered Liszt’s Second Hungarian Rhapsody. It was more showy than his so they gave me the honor. I was studying a difficult piece by Grieg at the time and for reasons that escape me I

decided to play that at the graduation. When the moment came when I was to play, I had a sinking feeling I had made the wrong choice. Two or three bars into the Grieg piece my mind went blank and I immediately transformed it into the Hungarian Rhapsody. Never before or since have I felt such shame.

“In between these two events was an intensely rewarding period of learning at the hands of superb instructors. They are more indelibly impressed upon my remote memory (recent memory ain’t so good!) than the instructors I had at City College. Here they are:

Mr. Standewyck—a man, passionately in love with the logic and sound of Latin. Ponys, of course, were de rigueur.

Mr. Alice—In so mellifluous a voice he seduced us into an interest in the Classics.

Mr. Robinson—Someone who brought out the best in us, by challenging those of us who loved geometry to do better than we thought we could.

Mr. Seftner—Who had the reputation of being a frightening taskmaster reigning over grades in solid geometry. He had the uncanny ability to draw a perfect free hand circle on the blackboard.

Mr. Goldway—Who loved literature and made us love it too. He got caught up in the McCarthy witch hunt.

“Most of the classmates I knew have passed on. Jimmy Wechsler was the bright star of our class. He became a columnist on [sic] the New York Post. I had the honor of tutoring him in solid geometry. Elkin Wendkos, another classmate, and a good friend of Jimmy, joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain and never

came back. Lenny Leight brought glory to T.H.H. as the captain of its fencing team. Reuben Fine led the chess team and became one of the world's greatest chess players. No one seemed to regret that we lacked baseball and football teams."

In an unpublished profile, Monte wrote, "Our family physician attended my graduation from Townsend Harris Hall in 1931³. I wanted to be a doctor and he seemed to embody in his person all that was humane and inspiring about medicine. We hear a great deal of talk these days about the vanishing breed of family doctor, but to have known one such person is to know how rare a thing this is, at least in a large urban center. He entered into the life of my family without my being aware of it and gave direction to my life. He was obviously born to be a doctor and I was not at all sure I was."

Monte became a freshman at CCNY at fifteen, when most adolescents his age were far from becoming a high school graduate, let alone ready for college. In one interview he said, "I was younger and scared stiff that I'd flunk out. NYU [was] one of the best schools in the country with a high dropout or flunkout rate after the first year. And the first year was extraordinarily difficult." With surprise examinations, the pressure to memorize an impossible amount of material made it an enormously stressful year for him.

Monte downplayed his intelligence saying he got into City College after three years instead of the usual four because of an uncle's political connections with somebody in Albany who, in turn, had ties to the medical licensing department. Monte said that although he had excellent grades, it was his uncle's connections that

“I was chosen over many people who were much more deserving . . . I loved the sciences and I might have gotten in on my own after four years—I don’t know.”

Monte was considerably younger than most of the people going to City College. Some of them were married; meanwhile, Monte was in the throes of puberty. It helped that he always had a girlfriend. Monte also had friends there who were able to reassure him that he would graduate, in spite of his frequent doubts. Generally a worrier, Monte felt intimidated by the school’s policy of placing its students in one of four achievement levels. He was in the third level, just one from the bottom rung, and was exceedingly relieved that he had passed. Monte spent his first year regularly studying until two or three o’clock in the morning trying to memorize arteries, bones, nerves, and every other anatomical part. He was unable to eat meat for the whole year he had to dissect a cadaver.

City College was a hotbed of political radicalism. Coming from a conservative Republican family, Monte had little, if any, exposure to political values diametrically opposed to those his parents ascribed to. Once at CCNY he quickly learned, “you were either a communist or you were a stupid dope.” Monte admittedly yielded to peer pressure and began reading about Karl Marx and Marxism. At CCNY, he discovered that he resonated with the students who championed the working poor. He read as many books on Marxism, socialism, and communism, as he could get his hands on. Monte had found his political niche and from then on, he let his disdain be known for the greed and corruption that was not uncommon in the corporate world.

Monte saw Marx as a misunderstood humanist. That is, Monte viewed capitalism as insidious and communism as a step forward toward a more humane way of organizing a society. Further, he had faith that there were “ways of understanding an imperfect world and ways of doing something about it”⁴. Even as a young man, Monte was uncomfortable with people who seemed to have a need for an opulent lifestyle. This, of course, went contrary to his mother’s perceptions of being successful. She could not separate success from a hefty bankroll. Monte was never driven by great wealth. His focus had always been on social justice and equality.

William died in Monte’s second year of med school. He recalled hearing the news in pathology class: “One of us had a microscope and we were looking at microscopic images of pathology. I was in my second year of medical school. The professor came over to me and he said, ‘you’re wanted on the phone.’ And I went to the phone and I was told my father dropped dead in his office of a heart attack. And the synchronicity or the strange thing was that at that moment that I was called to the phone, my eyes were glued on a core section of a coronary artery that was occluded with atherosclerosis.”

After medical school, Monte joined the communist party for a brief period. Although he had no regrets from this part of his life, his anxiety about joining the Party led to taking his house out of his name and placing the deed solely into Janet’s name. His thinking was that if he were arrested, there was no telling what would happen to his assets.

While Monte's political juices were awakened, he was also attending to his pre-med coursework at CCNY. He found chemistry boring, math exciting and was in "an horizon-expanding" course in philosophy with the Socratic scholar, Morris Raphael Cohen, after whom the CCNY library was named.

Chapter Three: The Bindelof Sitter Group

A man with unlimited interests and curiosity, Monte's political exploration coincided with his introduction to the world of parapsychology. From 1932 until 1934, he was a member of what is now well known in the parapsychology community as the Bindelof sitter group⁵. The group was originally established in 1931 by three boys, Gilbert Roller, Jeff Lauer, and Larry Levin. Monte was the fifth member of the group after another boy, Leo Keiser, joined.

Though Monte was determined to remain in the group, it was a source of considerable stress. His parents were highly critical of his participation and forbade him to attend. After arguing with them for months, he came up with a plan that toned down their pressure on him to give up the group. Monte solicited the assistance of the chairman of the CCNY psychology department, Professor H. A. Overstreet. Dr. Overstreet replied to a letter Monte had written to him about some of the paranormal experiences that he had witnessed during the sittings. Dr. Overstreet wrote, ". . . I am afraid that I cannot give you any really serviceable advice. These matters are all so mysterious that one simply has to go ahead and experiment as best he can. Some time after the beginning of the term, if you will be good enough to drop into my office on an afternoon, I shall be most happy to talk the whole matter over with you."

Monte shared, “the resistance I had encountered from my parents lessened either in the face of my determination to continue or because of Dr. Overstreet’s interest or both.”⁵

In a period of over two years, the core Bindelof group, along with several other “non-regulars,” witnessed extraordinary phenomena that most skeptics would surely attempt to debunk. Tables levitated above the boys’ heads and photographs emerged from unexposed plates. Monte’s younger sister, Jean, once agreed to join a sitting. She never returned after her first experience—it scared the life out of her when the table the group rested their hands upon began to make loud knocking sounds.

The most remarkable feat occurred during the last year of the sittings, when printed notes, some lengthy, magically appeared following sounds of furiously rapid scrawling on a pad of paper placed on the lower shelf of a table. The notes that appeared were written by an entity that identified himself as a physician, Dr. Bindelof, after whom the group was named. Dr. Bindelof communicated that his motives for manifesting himself were altruistic and in the spirit of curing maladies.

The sittings are well documented in the 2001 *Journal of the American Society of Psychical Research*⁵. A book written by Rosemary Pilkington, *The Spirit of Dr. Bindelof: The Enigma of Séance Phenomena*, details these experiences as well⁶.

Monte’s oldest granddaughter, Annalese, told of her own Bindelof experience. She was twenty-eight at the time of our conversation on September 4, 2006. Monte had given her a picture of Dr. Bindelof received from the December 16,

1933 sitting. Dr. Bindelof's communications to the young boys on that day included detailed instructions on how to secure a photo of his likeness. Incredibly, the photo of Dr. Bindelof "came out looking like a distinguished Victorian gentleman."⁵

Annalese kept the sacred relic in a box that contained her "treasures." The only time she would take the picture out of the box is when she would show it to friends who had an interest in parapsychology. One day she opened the box to find that the picture had simply vanished. She hasn't seen it since that day. Of course, one could make a variety of arguments that would be easy to explain away the disappearance of the photo. But because of the location and all the remaining contents in the box, Annalese believes that Dr. Bindelof played a hand in this interesting event.

Given the enormity of these shared experiences, the boys were friends throughout their lives. Perhaps Monte's most enduring friendship was with Len, sometimes called Leonard, on other times, Jeff. The pair first met in their pre-adolescent years, when they played football at a boys' club. Monte loved the fact that Jeff was well read—brilliant in fact—and artistic. But mostly, he loved Len for his generosity of spirit and his sensitivity. Years passed without any contact, until both were in their second year at City College of New York (CCNY) when they found each other in several classes together. Monte unabashedly admired Len and when Len told him about the powerful results he and the other boys were seeing in their ongoing séances, Monte was immediately ready to join in. His unshakable belief in Len, knowing he was normally a stickler for scientific evidence, was all the proof Monte needed to take part in this adventure. When Len died in 1988, Monte was devastated.

When asked what his impressions were of the group, Monte replied “Let me put it this way. Practically everybody, except Jeff, took Bindelof as real. I didn’t have an opinion really. Jeff had questions about his reality. I tended to sort of follow his lead. . . . And it was clear, in retrospect, Jeff, Len and I wondered whether this was generated by adolescent turmoil [by a] particularly unusual group of adolescents. Gil was enormously talented in many things, and so was Jeff. Jeff was a brilliant guy, and Larry had a lot of talent. He wanted to be an actor and he had a lot of emotional stuff going on and would entertain us during the breaks with some of his antics. So it was quite an unusual bunch. But I was kind of quiet and more reserved than the others. And for awhile we had a really wild guy our same age—Tom who was a poet and who at age fifteen or sixteen, was reading T. S. Eliot and quoting his poetry. He was much more sophisticated than me.”

Monte and Larry, only about a week apart in age, were schoolmates and had met at Townsend Harris High. Larry had spent his thirteenth year traveling with Eva Le Gallienne’s Civic Repertory Theater. A year later, the sittings began. Monte, who lived on West End Avenue and 84th Street, and Larry on West 85th Street, in Manhattan would walk home together most Saturday nights after a sitting and they would talk for hours. The picture of Dr. Bindelof that appeared during one of the sittings became a part of Larry he said he could not be without. That picture gave him strength when times in his life became tough.

Larry viewed Monte as reserved and even exasperating at times. Unlike Monte and most of the other sitters, Larry was the only one who never for a moment doubted that Dr. Bindelof was an incarnate being. Later, after the group disbanded

and while he was studying psychiatry, Monte began to look at Bindelof from a clinical perspective. Larry was indignant when Monte suggested that the sitters had created Dr. Bindelof out of their unmet father needs.

The sittings informed the futures of each member of the group, although each went on to widely diverse fields. Destiny brought the boys together. And their combined energies shaped so miraculous a time in their lives that none of them could deny the existence of psi. These young boys were able to get a glimpse of what lies beyond our physical existence.

Monte's career as a parapsychologist might not have come to fruition without this improbable juncture in his life. This was his first experience of the relationship between consciousness and life beyond death. The group met as men for three reunions: in 1966, 1969, and 1971. In his 1995 Bindelof chronicle, Monte reflected on these EHEs (exceptional human experiences). In Part IV of the series, Monte wrote: "In most of the EHEs that I have read about the transformative effect was brought about by a sudden peremptory experience. In my case it was different. The triggering experience went on for almost two years and the transformative impact rippled out over my subsequent life. It was in a sense a chronic EHE in its onset and in its transformative effect, which ran a chronic course over the ensuing six decades. It made its presence felt with each of the mysteries I encountered as my work and interests drew me to the paranormal, hypnosis, dreams and aspects of psychopathology, in particular the psychological content of the major psychoses. In each of these instances the Bindelof experience helped me eschew much of the conventional explanations in favor of a greater appreciation of the depth of our

ignorance about the nature of reality. In preparing this account I have come to more fully realize how pervasive these earlier experiences have been on my life. Getting it down on paper was a task I knew I had to do.” Later in life, the sittings would also play a principle role in his reflections on the relationship between dreaming consciousness and quantum theory.

Chapter Four: Medical School

Monte attended New York University from 1934 to 1938, where he received his medical doctor degree. He wrote that the years he spent at NYU, “internally were essentially an exercise in trying to be more grown-up than I actually felt.” He added, “. . . The only person who bridged what I experienced as the impossible gap between the faculty and myself was Paul Schilder, and in bridging that gap, provided me for the first time with a model toward which I could aspire. He was creative, spontaneous and imaginative and although looked upon by some of my fellow students as odd (as were most exponents of psychiatry in those days), he was the only instructor I experienced in a personal, warm and interested way.”⁴ Paul Schilder was clinical director and director of research at Bellevue, the well-known psychiatric hospital at NYU, from 1930 until his death in 1940.⁷ Monte’s interest in neurology was no doubt inspired, if not nurtured by Schilder, who, like Monte, combined his careers in neurology and psychiatry.

Monte was mentored by some of the foremost medical doctors of his time. In 1938, just before his internship at Morrisania City Hospital, he toured some of the public health facilities in the Soviet Union. The tour was led by Henry Sigerist, who

in the early twentieth century was considered by many of his peers to be the world's finest medical historian.⁸ Of Victor Robinson Monte wrote, “. . . it was on this trip [to the Soviet Union] that I met another medical historian . . . with whose (sic) writings I had been familiar. Robinson, in his life and career, epitomized an ideal that had been privately nurtured. He wrote with a grace and compassion that was surpassed only by the verbal dexterity with which he exposed sham and hypocrisy in the Medical Establishment (sic), past and present. His image evoked the model of the physician-writer.”⁴

In 1941, at 25 years old, Monte started his year long neurological residency at Montefiore Hospital, while only seven years earlier, he was a regular in the Bindelof sitting group. His life experiences seemed to accelerate more quickly than most men his age. The following year was devoted to his psychiatric residency.

Nineteen forty-one was also the year that Monte married Janet. Once Monte was inducted into Janet's family, he realized all that he was missing from a “real family.” He said, “I grew up in . . . an upper aspiring middle class family going from the Bronx to Washington Heights to West End Avenue. Going up, up, up, the money ladder.” Monte described the marked contrast of his family of origin with Janet's: “And so when I got into Janet's family, I was in a real family. . . . I was in a family where everybody had to work. . . . For example, when Janet finally began to give [piano] lessons as a teenager, whatever she charged, her father took half of it toward the rent of the house. He was a tough guy, but not a mean guy. . . . [Janet's was] not a money oriented family that tried to rise up the social scale” He added, “I remember when I was courting Janet and she would tell me stories about her father who did

almost all the baking and cooking there. He used to bring home huge amounts of stuff from the wholesale fruits and vegetable supply store. Everybody thought he ran a store! . . . He would cook, he would make wine; he was a real mentshish. And I remember Janet telling me that when [all six children, five daughters and one son], were going to school, [Janet's father] would be up at 6 o'clock in the morning making . . . huge, really savory, wonderful Jewish sandwiches. The kids would take them to school, and all the other kids wanted a bite, because their sandwiches were very different. His were good, really super. He loved food, he did most of the cooking, and he loved to garden. He was a man who used his hands effectively. And Janet would tell me he used those hands sometimes when the kids were bad! She says that the routine was that if she did something bad, he would look at her, [and then] he would start taking off his belt and she would run away! That was the scenario. She'd come back and he'd forgotten about it. He was not cruel. He was just very firm." And an afterthought, "Incidentally, he made wonderful . . . stewed foods and stewed peaches." Even though Monte loved talking about and eating food, he was skinny as a rail!

Monte and Janet broke up and got back together a couple of times before he finally asked her to marry him. He couldn't imagine life without her and they finally took the plunge. Their wedding was simple but elegant and took place in her parents' living room. Particularly meaningful to Monte was that Janet's father made the chairs and benches for their guests to sit on during the ceremony.

Having just started his residency, he explained, "I had one day off for our honeymoon. We spent the afternoon looking for a medical bookstore where I bought

a textbook of neurology written by the famous Sir Russell Brain. We had supper at a Chinese restaurant where I had trouble cashing a hundred dollar bill we had gotten from her father as a dowry.”⁹ And that was the not-so-romantic honeymoon.

In 1942, only a year into their marriage, Monte was drafted into the army. He wrote, “We spent a year together in the south where our first child [Susan] was born. We were then separated for a little over a year and a half while I was overseas. It was the only extended separation in our marriage.”⁹ By all accounts, Monte and Janet were devoted to each other until the day she died in 2001.

Chapter Five: Army Days

In December, 1942 during World War II, Monte was drafted into the Army as a lieutenant, achieving officer status because he was a medical doctor. Although the trip on his troop vessel across the Atlantic was frightening—German submarines were never far away—Monte believed in the cause and was proud to serve his country.

At the time he was drafted, Monte was in the last month of his psychiatric residency. By then, he had already headed the psychiatric department at N.Y.S. Psychiatric Institute. In England, his initial wartime deployment, Monte was immediately put in charge of the hospital’s psychiatry and neurology department. There was no shortage of young men with “shell shock,” or “hysterical symptoms,” now under the rubric of posttraumatic stress disorder.

Monte had been hypnotizing people since the age of 16 and he used this honed skill regularly with his soldier patients. Monte’s first hypnosis subject was his

sister, Jean. He used what he termed, “the Ullman method,” to put her under, having observed such techniques in theatrical settings. Jean was highly susceptible to suggestion, probably largely because of her unwavering faith and trust in her brother. Jean went into a trance almost immediately. Monte put a penny at room temperature on the top of her hand, suggesting that the penny was very hot. Upon this suggestion, Jean immediately threw the penny off as a reaction to the intense heat! Monte was so excited about his success with the penny, he went right into another experiment. He filled up a glass with water and told Jean that the liquid was whiskey, that it would be good for her to drink it down to settle her stomach. Jean, as cooperative as she’d been with the hot penny, was completely snookered and could barely walk, ostensibly from the “cocktail”.

Monte’s playfulness came out with his soldiers, too. One anecdote he described was about an 18 year old who came to him after landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day with hysterical mutism. After the soldier was hypnotized, Monte had him recite the Gettysburg Address. Monte awakened him in the middle of it, and upon hearing himself speak, the young man was instantly cured.

Monte told another story of a twenty seven year old Switzerland-born soldier who joined the American army. [In 1945], “We were settled in Eaubonne, which is a suburb of Paris. [The soldier] had hysterical blindness and he was sent to the ophthalmology ward. They thought it was genuine blindness until the ophthalmologist examined him and said it was hysterical, and sent him over to my unit. And he was a very good hypnotic subject.”¹¹

“In the first place, I cured his blindness. I gave him a magazine to read, and he read it. When he woke up reading it, he realized he could see. But then he had to wait a couple of weeks to be sent back to the States, because [psychiatric patients were not permitted] to go into battle.”

In that the soldier was such an excellent hypnosis subject, Monte was eager to do further experiments. After re-enacting a battle scene that traumatized the soldier, Monte hypnotized him and this time suggested that a molten fragment from an exploded shell had landed upon the top of the soldier’s hand. When the soldier returned to his waking state, he complained of pain, thinking he may have burned his hand with a cigarette while sleeping. Later a blister appeared in the spot where he was experiencing pain!

While the young soldier waited to leave, Monte happened to be reading the book, *Emotions and Bodily Changes*, by Helen Flanders Dunbar¹⁰. Monte was particularly curious how warts might change under hypnosis. So Monte suggested to the soldier that he would develop a wart on his lip in 24 hours. Monte continued, “and sure enough, when I made rounds the next morning, he had a cold sore! So I put in [to have] a consultation [with] the dermatology department. The dermatologist came over, examined him, and he wrote on the consultation slip, ‘this is a fine day for the United States Army when a psychiatrist can’t make a diagnosis of herpes simplex!’” In fact, that’s what Monte wanted the dermatologist to say, that is, verifying the diagnosis of herpes simplex. Monte took the surgeon’s blood from the “good arm,” inserting the needle the maximum recommended depth for testing blood, more than one-eighth inch. As would be expected, the blood went from arm to

test tube easily. And then Monte tested the other arm, the one that had “no blood” in it. He did the procedure of drawing blood, but this time no blood appeared. Details of this study are documented in an article published in the American Journal of Psychiatry in May 1947.¹¹

Thus, Monte was given a considerable amount of freedom to do his innovative research. He explained, “I had a great time in a sense. It was interesting. Nobody interfered with me, and I used a lot of hypnosis. When Monte returned to the States at the end of his tour of duty, he performed a five year study, under the auspices of the Departments of Dermatology and Syphilology and Psychiatry and Neurology at New York University College of Medicine, examining the effects of hypnosis on warts. The study was published in the American Journal of Psychiatry (1947)¹¹.

By the end of the war, Monte’s life was less than a third completed. Those years barely scratched the surface of his achievements yet to come. Each subsequent phase of his life was a natural stepping stone from the previous one. Perhaps his greatest accomplishment was to establish a brilliant vehicle that encourages people to give unconditionally of themselves and, equally important, that allows us the willingness to be cherished by others. When we feel safe enough to be our authentic selves, we are perpetuating Monte’s vision of making the world a more loving place to live in. No doubt, much more has and shall be written about Monte’s fully lived life.



Figure 6: Monte 1 year?



Figure 7: Monte 3-4 years?



Figure 8: Monte, Jean & Bob



Figure 9: Monte's dad & ?



Figure 10: Monte's parents



Figure 11: Monte on Russia tour

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