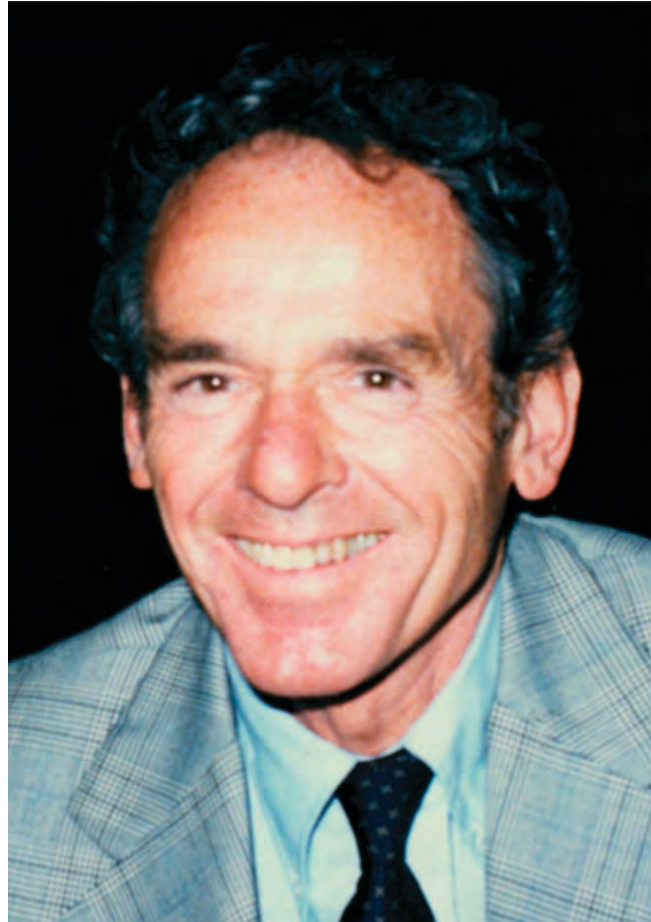


William Newton Thetford, Ph.D. – Life Story



William Newton Thetford, Ph.D.
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Based on interviews in 1982 with his friend,
psychologist and author, Frances Vaughan, Ph.D.

PART I

I was raised as a Christian Scientist. But after my sister, who was two years older than I, died when I was seven, religion lost all credibility for my parents. Right after that, I got rheumatic fever and nearly died, too.

One day I overheard a conversation my mother and my doctor had on an extension telephone, which was near my bedroom. She didn't know I could hear the exchange. Essentially, the doctor said I had a fifty-fifty chance of surviving, and that if I did I would probably be an invalid. I was still seven and very sick, and confined to bed. After this, I made a decision that I was not going to be an invalid and that I was not going to die. It's very hard to



Bill and his sister, Pat, 1924

describe or explain what I was doing, but I chose not to pay any attention to what the doctor said. At some level I seemed to be aware that it was up to me. In retrospect, I could say that I made a specific choice to live.

After that, I was out of school for three years and stayed home, while my mother tutored me. My joints were lightly twisted by the rheumatic fever and I had a postural problem. When I was 10 years old, I learned to walk again and went back to a public grade school. It was for crippled and cardiac patients. The bus would come every morning and pick me and the other kids up. The school was all on one level so I didn't have to climb steps. I remember we had rest periods after lunch. That was my reunion with peer groups, other kids that were sick and crippled. After three years of home schooling, it was a difficult adjustment but I did make it reasonably well. They put me in fourth grade and I got a lot of double and triple promotions in grammar school, which is why I entered high school when I was twelve.

I didn't feel a great deal of stability in all this. Everything seemed very vast, but I never thought about it in terms of spiritual choices. Rather, I tried to be normal in high school. That seemed very important, because I didn't want to be perceived as different. I pretended that I had not been out of school, or sick or had problems. I was probably a typical kid in most



Bill and his mother, 1923



Bill and Pat, 1926

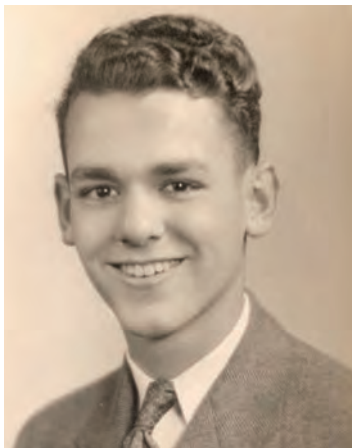
ways before that, and suddenly I realized I wasn't. I started reading books because I didn't have anything else to do. As a result, I had well-developed reading skills far beyond my age level. Even though I couldn't participate in athletics, everything else seemed to go along well.

At that time, I had a feeling of leaving one life behind and starting another. Something about my illness seemed like a death followed by a rebirth. It marked the end of my childhood; it was as if a new persona emerged. Also, I was very much aware of the fact that eventually I would have to support myself. I had to think about that seriously. I couldn't imagine going to work in business as most people seemed to do. That seemed just awful.



Bill, age 9, 1932

In addition, my father always worried that I might end up on the public dole, which only added to my concern. He was born in southern Illinois; he was one of ten kids on a farm. They were coal miners, and very poor. He later got a job with the telephone company and became a superintendent in the building and construction department—a good job in those days. My father was overly concerned about having this sick kid. I don't think he thought that I was likely to be well enough to do very much. Obviously I could not do much physically, and that was the only thing he understood. There was no education premium in my family. When I did get my Ph.D. he asked what I was going to do with it. He thought, "You hang it on the wall and then you make a living." To him, getting a Ph.D. didn't seem very practical. I grew up in a very concrete, lower middle class family. Survival was the main thing. Culture was irrelevant.



Bill, age 14 years

After graduating from Lindblom High School in Chicago in the winter of 1940, I wanted to go away to college. I was sixteen and didn't have any money, yet I didn't want to go to any places in Chicago. Fortunately, I won a four-year full tuition scholarship to DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, a reputable Liberal Arts college with high academic standards. That seemed like a good place to go, so that's where I went. I wasn't too far from Chicago; with the scholarship and the help of my family, I could do it.

Going away to college was a little difficult. In my freshman year I became a pledge in a fraternity house, thinking that I would have a support group away from home. It was awful. I had led a rather quiet life, and here there was something going on at all hours of the day and night. It was difficult to stay focused to be one of the boys. Somehow I got through it. The Second World War started during this period, too. When I graduated from DePauw in January 1944, just a few months before I turned 21, we were still involved in the war. But I was rejected by the draft because of my rheumatic heart condition. I was also accepted to medical school, so I could be deferred if I wanted to be.

Medical school started in September at the University of Chicago, and I needed a job. I didn't have the financial means to go to medical school; the whole thing was a fantasy. I thought

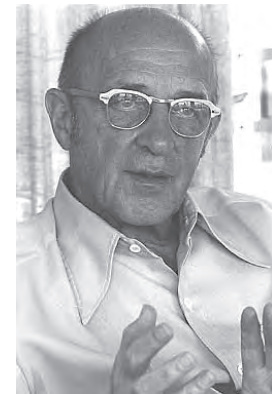


*Bill, at the University
of Chicago*

that if I worked for several months I might have enough money to get through the first year. I got a job at the University of Chicago working as one of ten administrative officers with the scientific team doing atomic research and reporting to the University's administration. Robert Maynard Hutchins was the University's Chancellor then. He appointed Lawrence Kimpton as laboratory director of the atomic bomb project and chief administrative officer of the laboratory. Eventually I got promoted to faculty payroll, and was given a private office and secretary. I didn't go on to medical school as planned because I decided that I really should finish my commitment to this project. So I stayed there until the summer of 1945, when the war ended. Feeling there was no need to continue, I then thought I should do some graduate work in psychology, since I wasn't sure I was up to medical school, or whether I even wanted to go. The faculty was

very nice and said if I wanted to get a Ph.D. first, they would reconsider me for medical school later. I thought, "Well, okay." I wanted to see what it was like to get a Ph.D., since I didn't know what that was about.

In fact, I didn't know much about anything, but I thought psychology was interesting. Carl Rogers, the noted psychologist, had appeared on campus at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1945. He was just getting started. I knew some of the graduate students from Ohio State who had come with him, having met them the summer before. They told me about Dr. Rogers and what he was doing, and it sounded interesting. His professional premises were founded on his theory of "unconditional positive regard" — or perfect love — and he taught that unconditional positive regard was an essential prerequisite for client-centered therapists. I now realize what he was really emphasizing: total acceptance in our relationships meant expressing perfect love. I took his first course with about a hundred graduate students. Carl made me his teaching assistant during that course. I thought it was strange because I didn't even have a master's degree and was younger than most of the others. I tried to tell him I wasn't qualified, but he offered me a research assistantship the following quarter. I became the first person who was not imported from Ohio State to work with Carl on staff. That's probably one reason I always felt sort of strange that I didn't become a client-centered therapist. Actually I did do Rogerian therapy for about a year for at least thirty hours a week. But it was not what I wanted to do indefinitely.



Dr. Carl Rogers

Eventually I got a Ph.D. One of the reasons I wanted to get a doctorate degree was that it is sort of like a union card. I didn't really know anybody well who had ever gotten one, and it seemed very doubtful that I was going to get one. So I was quite amazed when it happened. At the same time, my parents were going to retire to Florida. My mother was not well. She had multiple sclerosis and they needed to get out of the Chicago area to a better climate. I did get my Ph.D. before they left and when I did, they still didn't know what I was going to do with it. I believed getting a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago at age 25 was a big deal. I thought it should have been appreciated, but it wasn't, and I was obviously disappointed.

However, my doctorate in psychology opened up a whole different life for me, and this time I really felt comfortable. Carl was an important part of it, but I liked the whole atmosphere

of the University. I liked the people and I found the entire experience very exciting. Chicago is supposed to be cold, but I didn't find it cold at all. I made a lot of great friends and was feeling good for the first time in my life. That was another big shift for me—a very big shift. I'm sure there was some relationship between different parts of my life, but my early childhood seemed to have nothing to do with my later childhood and subsequent intellectual development. When the transitions occurred, there appeared to be a discontinuity. At the time I was not aware of any disconnection. In retrospect, I see that in my life I appear to have lived several different lives.

Professional Stepping Stones

When I got my Ph.D., I went to work at Michael Reese Hospital on the south side of Chicago, not far from the University. It was the major Jewish training hospital in Chicago. Dr. Samuel J. Beck was the head of the psychology department. There were other famous people there at the time including Franz Alexander, Thomas French, and Emmy Sylvester. It was considered the big psychiatric center, and I actually got a job there because I wasn't qualified. I had taken the minimal number of courses to get my doctorate. When I was finishing my dissertation, an anthropology graduate student, whom I didn't know too well but occasionally had lunch with, asked me what I was doing about work. He seemed to take an interest in whatever was going to happen after the dissertation was finished. I wasn't all that interested. He mentioned this position at Michael Reese with Dr. Beck.



Dr. Samuel J. Beck

Samuel Beck had a grant from the NIMH, the National Institute of Mental Health, to do a study on schizophrenia and the Rorschach Test. Apparently he had hired a well-known psychologist and that had not worked out, so there was an opening. My friend was very persistent and said I should write to Dr. Beck and have an interview, which I finally did. When I met Dr. Beck, who had a very strict way of talking, he asked, "What have you done in the Rorschach?" I said I hadn't done anything with the Rorschach; I had never even taken a course on it. He said that that was wonderful; I hadn't been spoiled by any false teachings!

He wanted to know about my research for a Ph.D. I told him I was doing a study of psychophysiological measurements before and after Rogerian psychotherapy using galvanic skin response, heart rate, and respiration. The results indicated change did occur in the people who had therapy as opposed to a control group. We discussed tolerance, frustration, and so forth. I'm not sure I learned anything, but Beck was very impressed. He thought the whole thing with psychophysiological measurements of the autonomic nervous system was just terrific. He thought it was real science. So he hired me because I didn't know anything about the Rorschach and because I was a scientist. And there I was the only non-Jewish member of the psychiatry staff. It was an interesting environment because of the whole question of acceptance in reverse. Would I be accepted in the closed circle? Actually I was, and they even explained the Yiddish jokes to me. It was an interesting place to be. It gave me a chance to learn about personality tests and measurements, and I learned about the Rorschach directly from Beck. It seemed a very unlikely way to start a career, but it worked.

I stayed there for two and a half years. By that time the grant had run out, and Beck was no longer chairman of the psychology department. He had been replaced by Sheldon Korchim, who was younger and more flexible and interested in doing all kinds of studies on stress and anxiety. Korchim later became head of clinical psychology at the University of California at Berkeley. I finished up what I was supposed to do on the grant and realized I would have to do something else. I couldn't think of any place else I really wanted to go in Chicago, since this was the most interesting research center in the area. And I was never really sure what kind of psychology I was going to do, but I had already worked with Rogers and had joined the American Psychology Association (APA) when he was president in 1947. By the time I got my degree in 1949, I was already an APA member. Working with Rogers and Beck gave me some clinical training, and I had studied typology with William Sheldon in Chicago. I had also worked with the sociologists who did the analysis of class structure: upper class, middle class, and related strata. I knew a lot of people in the field because it was a very small one. I even took a class from Nathaniel Kleitman in physiology, which was held right after lunch, and I would doze off. I heard he was a great expert on sleep, but I could never stay awake in his class.

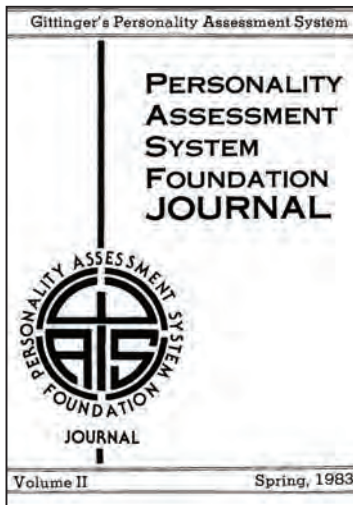
About that time in the early fifties, I was approached by a representative from the Central Intelligence Agency—the CIA—telling me about this wonderful project that was comparable to the OSS, or Office of Strategic Services, during the Second World War and under the direction of Henry Murray. The book that was written on this project was “The Assessment of Man.” It was a very exciting period in which all kinds of innovative things for assessing people’s capabilities under stress were being developed. So in 1951 I went to Washington with the CIA, where I worked for another two and a half years in CIA’s Office of Training, as part of the Assessment and Evaluation Staff, as an assessment senior psychologist. It all seemed quite improbable. I wanted to travel, too, and had thought earlier I should go to Europe and do some sightseeing because I hadn’t done anything like that. It seemed unlikely, though, because I would only be doing assessments. And once you were in a slot in “the organization,” no one wanted to let you go.

While there, however, I met John Gittinger, an innovative, clinical psychologist who had joined the CIA in 1950, over a year before I arrived. John had been developing a model about personality development, which he called the Personality Assessment System or PAS. He began teaching the PAS informally to some of us on staff. As a result, I became very intrigued with it. Its capacity to assess and predict behavior was so accurate that I began working with him and others to further develop and refine it.



John Gittinger

Briefly, the PAS assumes that a child very early in infancy is inherently susceptible to certain styles of behavior, and that personality develops simultaneously and continuously in three dimensions: intellectual-perceptual, emotional-procedural, and social-interactive. By using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales and sophisticated psychometrics, an individual’s personality traits can be defined and his behavior predicted with extraordinary accuracy. In fact, after working with the PAS, I thought John Gittinger had designed the most powerful descriptive and predictive system in the world for assessing personality. I also felt that, as a personality assessment and predictive tool, the PAS ranked with the discoveries of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung in psychology.



John and I remained in contact after I left the CIA. In fact, our friendship and interests led to a contractual arrangement with his organization, called Psychological Assessment Associates, for continued work with him on the PAS. Although this made me somewhat uncomfortable, since it was still a CIA-supported endeavor, I respected John and his PAS so much that I felt compelled to help in its continued development. This took place primarily when I was at Columbia University, from the late fifties to mid-seventies. When Helen Schucman arrived and joined me at Columbia in 1958, at my invitation, she also became involved in the PAS work. By then Helen was a well-established research psychologist, and her contributions to the PAS were significant and greatly appreciated. Together, we collaborated with John on the PAS work for a number of years under contract. Helen and I also wrote a number of academic papers on the Personality Assessment System and our work with it; these papers were published in psychology journals over that period. In addition, I taught the basic concepts and structure of the PAS and its assessment use during the 1960s in New York.

However, the main reason I went to Washington was because I wanted to go to the Washington School of Psychiatry. Its essential philosophy was to focus on interpersonal relations rather than upon many of the psychodynamic components of Freudian psychology, and this was of keen interest to me. There I studied with Herbert Marcuse, Clara Thompson, Dexter Bullard, Margaret Rioch, and Ernst Schachtel through an accommodating schedule that did not interfere with my full-time duties as a senior psychologist with the CIA. Before I left Michael Reese Hospital, the chief social worker there said I should meet her brother in Washington, who was head of Chestnut Lodge where Frieda Fromm-Reichmann was doing research on schizophrenia. As soon as I got to Washington, his wife called and invited me to a dinner party. Actually, they were giving two dinner parties, and she asked which one I would like to attend—there were famous names for each one. I said I would like to meet Frieda; so they arranged for me to attend that one and be her dinner partner. She was then treating Erich Fromm—one of her patients at that time—whom she later married.

When I started work in Washington in the fall of 1951, I felt that I really couldn't stay too long with the CIA. To me that would have been a disaster, although I didn't have any idea of what to do next. I was about to announce my resignation in 1953, when the head of the whole training program asked me to please reconsider. I wouldn't have to stay in Washington, I could just take some time off what I was doing and they would send me to the Middle East for the summer. I would be put in charge of a group of foreign-service type specialists who were there to observe things firsthand. I was assured that when I came back I could do whatever I wanted. Since this offer to travel was what I had always wanted to do, I went off in June of 1953 and came back in October. During that summer I traveled all over the Middle East, visiting Jordan and Egypt, Israel, Cypress, Syria, Turkey, Greece, and Iraq. I came back through Europe where I also vacationed for several weeks. It was quite a trip.

When I got back to Washington in October, after several months of fun and games, I thought I really couldn't resign just yet. So I resolved to stay on until the following summer, at

least through June 1954. After June I decided it was time to get out of there, and I did—even though I didn't have a job or anything lined up. That was actually the first and the only time I ever looked for a job.

I used to go to New York frequently, so I applied to the New York Unemployment Service with the Psychological Placement Bureau. I don't know why I went there, but I did. I said I was looking for a job in New York, but the guy who was head of the service said, "They want you in Hartford. You have to go to the Institute of Living. I was reviewed and hired in the autumn of 1954 as Director of the Psychology Department at the Institute of Living, in Hartford – the largest private psychiatric hospital in the country. I stayed there for a little over a year. Carl Pribram was there doing research on monkeys, along with a lot of other well-known people. Although it was a very nice, fancy set up, still, I didn't know what I was doing in Hartford, which seemed like a strange place to be. It was a sizable city with a small town feeling about it, which was okay.

While at the Institute of Living, in 1955, I was invited by Dr. Harold G. Wolff to join him at Cornell University in New York City because of my Washington contacts. Harold was treating Allen Dulles, Jr. at the time, and his father, Allen Dulles, Sr., was head of the CIA. In the course of this, Dulles had asked Wolff if he would like to do some research on Chinese and cross-cultural studies. Wolff was obviously interested in this research, which was funded by the CIA. So it was partly because of my connections in Washington that I was offered the job at Cornell as head of this psychological research program. Also, I was the only person with top-secret clearance who was actually trained and who knew something about neurophysiology. It seemed that if they were going to hire anybody, it was going to be me. That was my first academic appointment, first as an Instructor and soon after as an Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at Cornell. I never thought I ever wanted to be a professor, because I felt I had nothing to profess. But I accepted the Cornell appointment in 1955 and worked there with Dr. Harold Wolff for three years.



Dr. Harold G. Wolff

Harold was a world-famous neurologist, one of the founders of psychosomatic medicine. He was chairman of the Department of Neurology at Cornell's Medical College, and was a great authority on headaches—particularly migraines—as well as pain sensation and stress reactions and disorders. We published a great deal. Wolff was editor of the *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* and published some of our articles there. It was a big productive period. People would come to see the famous Dr. Wolff. Even Margaret Mead would sit on broken down lab stools waiting for Wolff to emerge in his white lab coat. He was very precise and very austere. He wanted to present the image of a Nobel prize-winning scientist in his simple revolutionize-the-world laboratory—but he didn't succeed. And, of course, he had migraine headaches.

My office was on the sixth floor of the New York Hospital in the neurology wing where he was. I was supposed to look like a scientist and wear a white lab coat. I was surrounded by water and gas jets and lab equipment. I didn't use them, but I had to look as if I belonged there. Wolff and his assistant would come tearing by about 11:30 to catch the elevator on their way to lunch. I would see this streak of white going by and occasionally hear, "Dr. Thetford!" That meant I was to stop whatever I was doing and run down six flights of stairs in the hospital and

join them for lunch. Lunch for Dr. Wolff meant grabbing a cup of black coffee and a piece of pie. He always wanted to get down there early so he wouldn't have to stand in line, since he couldn't stand waiting for anything.

At first, I thought he really meant for us to have lunch, but that was ridiculous. I could never eat anything because Wolff would start interrogating me the minute I sat down. "What have you learned this morning in terms of highest integrated functions?" "Are you going to change this and get our next publication out by tomorrow?" He used to go on and on like that. I was used to working under high pressure, but I wasn't used to that sort of intensity. When he wanted something he would say, "I'm leaving in a few minutes; please prepare an abstract for the International Biological Psychiatry Congress. I'll have to have it in fifteen minutes." I would go to my typewriter and dash off whatever he wanted. I would tap into some inner source and put it into some sort of English. I learned to make it sound super scientific.

As a matter of fact, that's how I found my apartment. I was looking around for something on the East side that would be within walking distance to the hospital and medical school. I wanted an old townhouse with high ceilings and a garden. And, of course, I wanted all that for under \$200 a month. One day, after knocking out one of those little meeting-time abstracts, I thought, "Good, he's gone. I can relax a bit." I had been trying to find an apartment in the *Times*. The Saturday night and Sunday edition ads ran through Tuesday, so Wednesday was usually a very "off" day. It happened to be Wednesday morning. But this inner voice, a kind of inner prompting, said, "Look in the paper today." I thought, "That's silly, there's nothing in it on Wednesday." I didn't really acknowledge inner promptings then, but this inner dialogue was going on and I was very much aware that I should look in the *Times*. I was resistant, but finally I did look, and there was an ad for an apartment on the East Side, on 78th Street: a townhouse with a garden. It sounded wonderful, and I called. Apparently I just got through to the owner or occupant, Paul Lynn, a well-known television and movie star. I had never met him, but I recognized his voice. He had just gotten up and plugged the phone in, so I was the first one to talk to him about the place. I dashed over in a taxi, and found the apartment was exactly what I wanted, at \$165 a month! I lived there for 18 years. It was a perfect answer to my housing needs, in the middle of Manhattan, just off Central Park near the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I couldn't have asked for a better location; it was wonderful.

At the time, I didn't pay much attention to the fact that I had experienced this inner prompting, because that would have been unscientific and I couldn't acknowledge anything like that. However, I did make note of it and thought it might be intuition, so I could talk about it a little, but not too much. Yet, it lingered; I didn't know what to do with it, and I certainly couldn't account for it. This was not the first time this sort of thing had happened to me, but it was a major example. I couldn't ignore it.

I stayed with Harold Wolff at Cornell for about three years, primarily doing research. Because our research project was supported by the CIA a lot of top secret activities were going on. I was also working with some Chinese people who had not returned to their homeland after the Chinese Revolution. They were stranded in this country, which was part of the whole idea of the cross-cultural stress studies. It was legitimate at one level, but also the CIA wanted to know something about these people. So the project was serving multiple purposes.

Then my father died suddenly. I had moved to New York in September and he died in early November. My mother had died the year before. I had to take care of my father's funeral

arrangements. When I got back to New York it seemed like madness—really high-pressured madness. We were publishing constantly, every month. A great deal of research reports and articles were coming out with my name on them. I was in the difficult situation of trying to adjust to a new job, a new life, and my father’s death. I realized I was alone and I was going to be doing whatever I did without a family. That was when I was asked to go on a mysterious trip to the Orient and come back on a freighter with Harriet Mills. I was still trying to settle my father’s estate, but went off to Asia to find Harriet Mills, who had been confined by the Chinese. A daughter of Presbyterian missionaries in China, she was born and also grew up there, then moved to New York City with her family. She was a graduate student at Columbia University, where she worked on her doctorate before going back to China to do some field research. Of course, she spoke the language and wanted to stay on, but ended up being one of the last Americans to leave. The Chinese government suspected anyone with her background and qualifications, which is why she wound up in jail. Finally they gave her a trial and expelled her from the country. So I was sent indirectly by the CIA to talk to her about her experiences.

Harriet was in Hong Kong and all transportation was blocked, except for one ship, which I had booked passage on. All arrangements were made secretly and undercover. It was both frightening and fascinating. I was not told where I was first going, which was Manila, before proceeding to Hong Kong to board the ship. I wasn’t sure she would be there. On board, I waited at the breakfast table—there were only three or four passengers—when she suddenly showed up. I was relieved she was there. It seemed obvious that it was a set up, so I thought the only thing to do was to be as innocuous as possible. I was, and after a while she relaxed and began to talk to me. She said, “Look, I don’t know who you are, but it doesn’t make any difference.” We had several weeks to talk. I felt guilty about secretly making notes about everything she said. Then I was getting sort of frightened because I didn’t want to leave my notes lying around. At that point, I had no idea what kind of set up this really was, and I didn’t know if there was somebody else on the ship with a covert assignment. Could I leave things in my cabin? I didn’t know. So I used thin notepaper and would jam it in my pockets.



Harriet Mills

We arrived in Vancouver just before Christmas, and I was instructed to call New York when we docked, which I did. By that time, Harriet and I had become quite friendly and really liked each other personally. We went Christmas shopping in Vancouver. It was interesting. Harriet had not seen a Western city in years. She said, “Even if this is a decadent capitalist culture, it is sort of fun.” We had a nice time, and I saw her again in New York afterwards. I wrote up all of my extensive notes, and they became part of the testimony that Wolff gave before the House Committee on brainwashing. She said essentially that it really didn’t matter, that she didn’t have anything to hide. I was quite impressed.

It was a long wild saga and a confusing but interesting period for me. Everything was in shift. I could see how going to Washington had led to going to New York, and becoming a professor—which was obviously not very obscure. And going to Michael Reese Hospital had led to instant fame, because I was publishing articles with Samuel Beck. If I had tried to plan a career with maximal exposure, I suppose going to Michael Reese might have been a goal. But I would have assumed that I would have had to be Jewish first of all, to even have entertained the possibility.

At the Washington School of Psychiatry I had taken all of the classes they offered. I had tried analysis in Chicago while I was at Michael Reese for about a year, three times a week. Later in New York, I went to a training analyst from the William Allyson White Foundation, which was the counterpart of the Washington School of Psychiatry. They were all related. Harry Stack Sullivan founded the Washington School. In a way, the Allyson White Foundation was an extension of the Sullivan School in New York. It was a lively and interesting place.

I had settled into Cornell, but I was under tremendous pressure every day, what with doing research and publishing constantly. Wolff was extremely difficult to work with. Few people stayed with him more than a short period of time. Usually they were exhausted or burnt out. He was both demanding and exacting. Even so, I liked him in an odd sort of way, and we actually got along well. I learned a great deal about a lot of things.

Right after that I was asked by one of my old friends from Chicago if I would consider an appointment at Columbia. They wanted someone like Carl Rogers, but he was obviously not interested. Actually, they wanted somebody to take care of getting grants every year from NIMH and to set up a doctoral training program. I wasn't interested in doing any of this and said so. However, I felt it would be impolite to refuse to meet the head of the department of psychiatry to see what was involved. I agreed to talk to him, but made it clear that I wasn't particularly interested in moving. They were prepared to offer me an assistant professorship, which I had attained at Cornell. I said I would think about it if they wanted to make me an Associate Professor. I was sure they would say no, and thought that would take care of the whole issue. Medical school hierarchies are quite rigid. You don't get to be promoted from Instructor to Assistant Professor in one year, and then a year later become an Associate Professor. Much to my surprise, it came through and I was appointed to the faculty at Columbia University Medical School, College of Physicians and Surgeons, in the fall of 1957, as Associate Professor of Medical Psychology.

Roles and Responsibilities at Columbia University – with Spiritual Beginnings

I arrived at Columbia in February of 1958 and was given some additional positions, which I had not expected. I was put in charge of all clinical psychology for Presbyterian Hospital, as director of its Division of Psychology. It was in shambles at the time. There was no department of psychology, and the people in clinical psychology were in a sort of loose federation. They had to be brought together and unified. It was an administrative nightmare, and involved not only Presbyterian Hospital but also Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute, which were administratively separate but professionally interrelated. My responsibilities included all three of them—the Hospital, the University, and the Institute. It was complicated and it never did work out terribly well, although we made a lot of progress. I made it functional, at least.

I encountered an enormous amount of competitive jealousy and resistance of all kinds. When I arrived, my close colleague, Art Carr, who was instrumental in my being invited to Columbia, didn't seem to want me there. He didn't want to make any of the changes that were necessary. He felt threatened, and particularly more so when I hired help.

One of the first things I was asked to do there was to hire a psychologist to work on a laboratory study program sponsored by the National Institute of Neurological Diseases. A grant

had been given to Columbia as one of the 16 collaborating institutions. It was necessary to hire a psychologist who was knowledgeable in mental measurements and test construction for infants and children. Since I didn't know that area at all, I went to a neighboring hospital and talked to Michael Smith, a psychologist who was eminent in the field. He said he would look around and call me. A week later I received a call from a woman who said, "My name is Dr. Helen Schucman. I was told to tell you that I am the person you are looking for."

When I met Helen, she seemed rather strange. She was obviously very bright, but a bit scattered. I had the feeling that her mind was going around in circles. There were a lot of peripheral non-sequiturs, but I was aware that there was a core that was very solid. She did not find the job being offered to her particularly attractive in terms of location. Where her office would be was not clear at that point. The salary was not good, and there was nothing particularly appealing about the position. She had had a number of better offers, but she took this one because she felt that she should. I learned later that when she met me a little voice within her said, "Oh there he is; he's the man you are supposed to help." Helen told me that was why she took the job. Of course, I didn't know that at the time.

I hired Helen for the research position in 1958 and she stayed in it for a few years. Later I was able to shift her more into teaching and training, which was compatible with her interests, although she didn't think of herself as a clinician. She had never taken a course in the Rorschach, and didn't know anything about it, so I taught her. But her clinical skills were good and her psychodynamic insights were profound. She was naturally good at interpreting the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and analyzing content on the Rorschach. She had an edge on the people who were trained. She became increasingly involved in clinical work as well as research grants. We were interested in developing certain aspects of personality theory and needed grants to keep the department going, including funds for secretarial help, among other things. We did a lot of complicated juggling with a number of variables. It worked well enough to keep it going. I kept feeling that it was important to be there for some reason—I wasn't quite sure why—but there seemed to be some meaning to what otherwise might appear to be just a lot of chaotic confusion.



*William Black Medical Research Building at
Columbia Presbyterian Hospital:
The building where Helen and Bill scribed
A Course in Miracles.
"For of the most High cometh healing..."
Ecclesiastes 38:2*

Helen liked precise, statistical kinds of analyses. She liked being able to design a program where you could consider variables carefully. She didn't care particularly what it was for, but liked the research design. As Helen sometimes put it, she could get away from the chaos of ordinary life in this work. She found a certain beauty and symmetry in this kind of statistical pattern, as one-way of coping with the universe. Eventually I was able to get her a better position at the Medical Center. She became the chief psychologist of the Neurological Institute, which became our central headquarters. It was also a way of bringing things together administratively. By making her my assistant, a lot of things were accomplished: it was a promotion for her and it was a basis for recommending her for an academic appointment. It certainly made things easier for me.



Helen

Helen and I spent a great deal of time with one another, and had lunch together every day. We worked on all sorts of projects. In 1963, I had been put on the space planning committee in the Department of Psychiatry in connection with a new research building that was under construction. Because of this appointment on the building blue prints, I was able to develop some space for two private offices in the corner of the psychiatric wing. It was a very desirable area and subsequently approved. When the building was completed in September of 1965, Helen and I moved into our new offices. And as if on cue, *A Course in Miracles* began the next month. It was amazing. As soon as we had a place, it started. I felt somehow—long before the *Course* began—that an ideal place was being prepared for us.

Also, just before we moved to our new offices, I had the feeling that we were in a treadmill operation that could go on indefinitely, trying to get research and training grants every year and trying to plan through administrative channels. Things were constantly changing and were always in a state of crisis. There was nothing solid, and there was a great deal of tension. I was involved in a lot of professional activities at the time. Howard Hunt and I edited the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* for six years, starting in 1965.

Then, too, the relationship between Helen and me not only became very close but also turbulent. It was constantly unpredictable. Temperamentally, Helen and I were different people. She was an intense, rather agitated, nervous person. I tended to withdraw during periods of stress, and she tended to become more verbal and assertive at those times. And there was certainly a great deal of tension in our style, our ways of relating, and our ways of dealing with problems in the department and with each other. At the same time, we wanted very much to do the best we could to help resolve the situation. Despite these personality differences, we worked quite effectively together in a large number of areas. Simultaneously there were those areas in which there was a great deal of friction. This whole difference in style became a problem for both of us. So it was difficult for each of us, in many ways. Yet, it never occurred to us to not work together. We knew it was important that we work things out together and we knew that we meant each other well—even if we didn't know how to do the working out. And as if this weren't enough, the stress level of the situation in which we found ourselves at Columbia Medical School had become unbearable. We were living in a continuous state of anxiety among professional colleagues who seemed to be chronically hostile and paranoid.



Bill & Helen in 1960

All of this was weighing heavily on me—as was the conflict that was part of the relationship Helen and I shared—when one day I found myself making an uncharacteristic, rather impassioned speech to Helen. I told her that even though I felt we could go on working this way indefinitely, I wondered if it was it really worth it. “There must be another way of living in harmony rather than discord, of looking at all this differently,” I said, “and I am determined to find

it.” I was aware that a lot of the difficulties had to do with attitudes, although I wasn’t quite sure how changing attitudes could change the job. I was very surprised when Helen agreed with me and said that she would help me find another way. It was a turning point for both of us. And it was the beginning of a joint commitment, which the two of us made. We didn’t know what we had committed ourselves to. But we were aware that we were somehow involved in a collaborative venture, and that it had great impact for both of us.

In retrospect, my spiritual journey began that day when I made my impassioned speech to Helen that “there must be another way,” and when she agreed to help find it. That was a major transitional period for me—yet, a transition with chaos. I was looking at professional achievement and recognition, and wondering if that was important or significant. There was a shift to at least some openness to spiritual direction. Yet, I really didn’t have any spiritual interests at the time. Religion was regarded largely as superstition and just wasn’t discussed—or considered worthy of discussion. I suppose there was some preparation beforehand, but the only thing I can recall was some questioning in the back of my mind, as well as some reading.

For example, around April 1965 and just before my impassioned speech to Helen, I read Hugh Lynn Cayce’s book *Venture Inward*. For some reason I felt it was something I would like to read, which was atypical of my interests and patterns at the time. When I did read it, I remember thinking it didn’t seem to me that Hugh Lynn Cayce was making this story up, although it was obviously preposterous by ordinary standards. I believed in telepathy anyway, as I had had my own experiences with that. Yet, I had a feeling that all these improbable things he said about his father, Edgar Cayce, the noted psychic, were true. If they were, I would have to think about this whole thing differently and open my mind to other possibilities. Hugh Lynn’s accounts of major healings at a distance, paranormal experiences, and the possibility that the “Lost Continent of Atlantis” once really existed—any of that, if true, could permeate other aspects of my thinking. I didn’t know how you could change a thought system bit by bit. On the other hand, I knew that if I accepted any of this—that if what he said were true—then I would have to rethink all of this very seriously, and would have to change an awful lot. Yet, I wasn’t sure how much of this was true, but I was also aware that I might need to find out. So in 1965 I arranged a trip for Helen and me to do just that. We went down to Virginia Beach to visit the Association for Research and Enlightenment (ARE), the organization established to preserve and study Edgar Cayce’s life and readings. Helen was impressed with Hugh Lynn Cayce and the people there. I always felt that that trip gave her permission to do what she did.



Edgar Cayce, 1943

A lot of things happened during that summer of 1965. Helen had been having a lot of visions and dreams of an underwater treasure chest containing a black book with the symbol of Aesculapius—the Greek god of healing—on the cover. The symbol is the familiar caduceus with two snakes entwined around it, commonly used by the medical profession. The black cover was identical to the binders we later used for holding the *A Course in Miracles* manuscript. I remember at one point, just before September 1965, Helen said to me, “You know, one of these days, Bill, I’m going to do something very unexpected.” And I remember saying, “Well, do you have

any idea what that could be?” And she said, “No, I don’t. But it will be something very unexpected.” During part of that summer we were also both traveling. Perhaps as a means of clarifying her thoughts on emerging spiritual themes, Helen began writing a series of letters to me. Here are a few brief excerpts:

Saturday

Dear Bill: I hope you will bear with this, because it may be important to both of us. This morning I kept saying sort of without intention, I am a channel. Which seemed to mean something at the time, but the channel got clogged up. It’s not open yet...

Sunday

Dear Bill: One evening we were walking, and my husband Louis pointed out a brain injured boy about twelve or so who was being pushed by his parents in a carriage. There were other disabled children there, too. As we walked, I suddenly and briefly got a sense of everyone walking happily and very much together on the same path. Like on a ladder. We’re not all on the same path yet. But we will all make it home eventually.

Tuesday

Dear Bill: I’m not sure I want to write this, but have an idea I’m obeying an order. These orders are rather stern and the main feeling I get is that I wouldn’t dare to disobey them...

During that summer Helen also had a number of acute fears about losing her vision. I think that this was associated in part with some of the new material that was coming up, because she was afraid of it. Instead of saying “I am really afraid of the material,” she would say, “I’m afraid of losing my vision.” That was a very frequent kind of comment that was made. Helen was always concerned about her eyes. She had a tremendous fear that somehow she would go blind. And she was constantly readjusting her glasses; she wore dark glasses frequently inside buildings to protect her eyes. She did different things of this kind.

Actually, her vision would change, depending very much on what was happening in our lives during a particular period of time. I remember when we were beginning to work on the *Course* she went through experiences where it was possible for her to take off her glasses entirely and see with great clarity, but for brief periods.

In September of 1965, my boss Dr. Lawrence Kolb, chairman of the department, became disturbed by pressure from the Presbyterian Hospital and the accounting department, because the psychology department was losing a great deal of money every month, according to their cost accounting system. He didn’t know how to handle this, but tried to do a juggling act without coming to terms with a number of things, including the fact that money coming in from the hospital to pay for psychology was being used for other purposes. Since he didn’t want to acknowledge this and was on the spot, he suggested that I go to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and find out how they made money on psychology, while we lost money on it. I knew the answer to this and so did he. I thought it was a charade, but it actually turned out to be an important thing to

do. The fact was that the Mayo Clinic had an upper middle class population that could afford to pay high or necessary fees. It was very different from Presbyterian where we were dealing with a multi-lingual population, many of whom were Hispanic. Patients in our clinics couldn't possibly pay anything, at least anything to speak of. Yet, we were supposed to be devoting our services to such clinic patients, who by definition were not the ones who could even afford the fees.

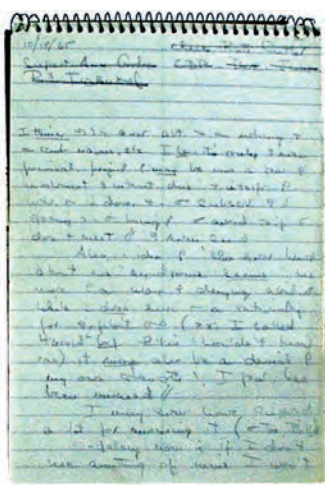
I invited Helen to go to the Mayo Clinic with me, as I thought it might be helpful for the two of us to get away. Before the trip, she started having some very vivid imagery. One of the images she had was of a Lutheran church, which she described in great detail. Helen's vivid description of this church, with turrets and towers, gave a clear picture of what it was supposed to look like. Before we left on the trip, she wrote that she was convinced we were going to see this church from the airplane before we landed. Helen felt it was important to see this church, to demonstrate that she wasn't losing her mind. It all seemed rather strange, and I didn't think we were likely to see a church from the air or the airport. On the flight, Helen became increasingly nervous as we approached Rochester for our landing and kept looking out the window. When she saw no church, she was extremely upset. I suggested that we rent a taxi to see the Lutheran churches in the area, to find out if there was anything that remotely resembled her church. We hired a driver and asked if there was anything exactly like that, but he mentioned a lot of other churches so we went to look at them. I think we saw about 25 churches, none of which bore any resemblance to Helen's imagery. She really was quite upset. We had to spend all next day talking to the people at the clinic. There was nothing to do but go to bed and forget the church.

In the morning we went on a grand tour of the Mayo Clinic and found out how they did everything. It was beautifully done. But all the things that could be done in an upper middle class hospital in Minnesota were obviously impossible to do in New York City in a clinic setting. They were also so extremely efficient that even their examining rooms were equipped with identical equipment in the same drawers so a doctor using any one of them would know exactly which drawer to open for material or what was needed. At the end of a long day, as I waited for Helen in the lobby of the hotel, I went over to the newsstand and saw this little booklet on the history of the Mayo Clinic. I leafed through it and there was a picture of a church, exactly as Helen had described it. It was a Lutheran church, but it wasn't there any more. The Mayo Clinic had been built on the site of this church, which had been torn down. I thought it was exciting. I showed Helen the booklet and told her she wasn't crazy after all. She had a very mixed reaction. She felt partly a sense of relief, but she really didn't want to hear about it. It was obviously too close for comfort. She didn't want to be psychic, and she never wanted to be called a psychic. It was typical of the usual discomfort and ambivalence, which Helen suffered in most situations. She found it difficult to be totally comfortable.

On our flight back from Rochester to New York, we had to change planes in Chicago. In the waiting room Helen spotted a young woman whom she thought was in serious trouble. As I looked around, it seemed that everyone in this waiting room looked uncomfortable, and I couldn't see any difference between this particular woman sitting far off in a corner, and other people. I certainly wasn't tuned in to her. All I wanted to do was to get back to New York and have some peace and quiet. Helen, very atypical for her, tuned into this young woman and said she was sure that she was really in trouble. She said, "I'm going to go over and talk to her," and she did. I said I would just stay where I was.

In a few minutes Helen came back and introduced the woman, whose name was Charlotte Zylch. I shall always remember that name. It turned out that Charlotte was actually leaving her family—two young children and her husband—and was going off to New York for the first time in her life. Having never been on an airplane, she was terrified of flying and also frightened about going to New York. She was really just running away. So Helen arranged for Charlotte to sit with us, and also promised to find her a place to stay in New York. When we were on the plane I asked Charlotte, “What would you have done if you had not encountered us?” She said, “I think I would have gone to the Lutheran Church in New York City and somehow they would have found a place for me.” At that point, everything came together, and Helen heard a very clear voice saying, “This is your real church—you helping your brother who is in trouble, not any physical edifice or building.” We were able to help Charlotte find a place to stay and a short time later she returned to her family.

The Mayo Clinic experience had a great impact on both of us. This was important preparation for Helen, in learning to listen to her inner voice and recognizing that this was a spiritual journey of some sort. Helen’s inner voice began actually dictating *A Course in Miracles* the following month. It seemed to me that this trip had been a very central part of the preparation.



PART II

When Helen heard this inner voice again, it was clearly identifiable. Helen prided herself as a research psychologist, but not as one who heard voices or who had heightened visual imagery or who experienced all of these psychic events that occurred during the summer of 1965. It was extremely distressing to her. She kept feeling that maybe she was losing her mind. Certainly she couldn’t reconcile all of this activity with her scientific predilections. And this became a particularly acute problem for her as the summer ended and early fall began. One night she called me, this was in October, and said, “You know that inner voice refuses to go away. It keeps saying, ‘This is *A Course in Miracles*, please takes notes.’ What shall I do? Suppose it’s crazy. Suppose it doesn’t make sense.” And she was obviously going through a great deal of anguish and agony at that point. I said the only obvious thing. “Why don’t you take down whatever it is? You can

read it to me tomorrow morning in the office, and if it doesn't make any sense, no one else has to know about it. But at least we'll know what it is." So that's what we did. The next morning Helen came in, and she read that beautiful introduction to the *Text*, which says: "*Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God.*" It was obvious we were tuning into something that could hardly be regarded as crazy, no matter how unexpected it was.

Part of my role with Helen in this was giving her support and reassurance when she felt frightened by these psychic experiences, as well as by other things that frightened her as the "project" continued. At some level, I believed the reality of certain kinds of psychic experiences, having previously had some in my own life, such as finding my apartment. And there were other experiences of that kind. I remember when I was a graduate student working on my Ph.D., I used to wonder at times, "Why am I doing this?" Once when I asked myself that question, I got a very clear answer: "You won't know for many, many years, but when you do, it will make you terribly happy." I just accepted it. In an odd sort of way there was a part of me that was familiar with the idea of inner communication, but I didn't know quite what to do with it. It wasn't something that was discussed in the academic setting I was in, so I just put it aside. I didn't deny the occurrence, but I didn't try to explain it either. Things of that kind had happened frequently enough for me so that I wasn't totally surprised by Helen's experiences. As I look back, there were a lot of experiences that were similar, odd happenings, which I couldn't quite explain.

So when Helen started hearing an inner voice, I knew it wasn't something that she was making up. In her attempts to gain attention, Helen had a strong, self-dramatizing tendency, but I knew this wasn't that. It didn't fit that category at all. This was something that was quite genuine. She was frightened of it, but acknowledged it as having the kind of authenticity that was not characteristic of her own ideas. Yet, she was also actually indifferent about it, despite its very compelling quality. And contrary to what some might think, Helen said she did not hear an external voice. What she heard really was a part of her mind, which was clearly separated from her ordinary ego consciousness or awareness. And in taking down *A Course in Miracles*, it was almost as if there was a tape recorder that she could turn on or off. All she had to do was listen attentively to what was said and record it in her shorthand notebook, which is precisely what she did. But there was no external voice of any kind. It was simply a very distinct thought impression that came through. And while the *Course* came in a form, which I never anticipated, I did regard this as the answer to my question that there must be another way and that I was determined to find it.

It seemed to me, to the extent that I valued being a scientist, that I should look at all the evidence before dismissing any of this. There was an initial, "Can this be true? Or can this be something totally preposterous?" But as I read the material, I recognized that Helen's ego self in no way could have written what I was reading. It was totally alien to her background, to her interests, and to her mode of conceptualizing abstract ideas. There was simply no way that the ego part of Helen could have done this.

After Helen heard the voice saying, "This is *A Course in Miracles*, please take notes," she was encouraged because when we typed up the material, it made sense. And as the material developed, a great deal of it became increasingly beautiful. Hundreds of pages are in iambic pentameter, Shakespearean blank verse. When we discovered that, it offered an additional dimension to the beauty of the concepts. It was almost as if we were being given words and music at the same time. Helen certainly responded very much to the literary quality of the material. That was important to her, and important to me, as well. Fortunately, too, Helen felt that it was her function

to take this down. Also, she couldn't really turn it off. At times when she would try to stop it, she couldn't sleep, or she would wake up in the middle of the night after a fitful tossing about. Then she would start taking down some of the material. It did seem as though she couldn't get any rest if she didn't do it.

So that is how we began. We also began in a state probably of panic. At the very beginning, I had trouble even typing some of this material accurately, which appeared in the form of telltale typos. For instance, when the term "salvation" came up I reversed the letters "a" and "l" and wrote "slavation." Or when it said, "you and your brother" I remember dropping an "r" and typing you and your "bother." I also had a little trouble with things like "crucifixion" which I spelled initially "fiction"—crucifiction. So there were lots of conflicts that we both experienced in trying to transcribe the material, and the difficulties and anxieties of getting it down. But I realized the first step was to simply get it down and then, once we had it, we could begin to study what it said.

Initially, too, when we got through the dictation of the "Fifty Principles of Miracles" that came first in the *Text*—and after reviewing these principles very carefully—I realized that if they were true than I would have to reevaluate absolutely everything in my life. I would really have to change my mind. For me, that was extremely threatening. I didn't see how it was possible to do that. It seemed to me that a challenge was being presented, and it appeared to be more than I could cope with. On the other hand, since I didn't know where this was leading—although seemingly in the right direction—I thought the only thing to do was to go with it and not try to affect a premature closure. I didn't know what I was capable of learning. Yet, this seemed like a very big job, and I wasn't sure I was up to it. But later I realized it's only a little willingness that is necessary. Readiness does not imply mastery—simply some willingness for change. I recognized that I had some willingness to do that.

The more I read of this material, the more sense it made. There was nothing about it which really seemed bizarre, except that it was a totally different thought system than I had grown up with. It was certainly not the thought system of my colleagues in psychology, and it was certainly not what was being practiced at the Medical Center. But there was a great sense of practicality about many of its concepts. And I think it was this that I found tremendously appealing and compelling. When it said you have but two emotions, fear and love, I realized that that answered this endless hierarchy of emotions, which we have plagued ourselves with in psychology and psychiatry. And basically that's true. If I am fearful, I cannot feel loving. When I am loving, I don't know anything about fear. So there was a kind of practical value to these concepts. And, of course, the application of them was something different. This meant gradually beginning to shift our minds.

The *Text* is the first part of the material we worked on. It lasted for almost three years, and ended up as a 669-page volume. We didn't know when we started what *A Course in Miracles* was going to be; we had no idea. We didn't know whether it might be just a few pages. But Helen did ask at one point, "How will I know when this is over?" And she was told, "You will hear the word, 'Amen.'" That phrase occurs at the very end of the *Text*, where it says, "And now we say amen."

When the *Text* was finished, Helen felt as I did, that our assignment was complete and that we had plenty to do to simply try to learn those concepts and apply them in our lives. At that point, too, Helen felt both relieved and anxious that she had lost her function; it had seemingly

ended. In the interim there was no further material and no indication that there would be any more. However, after a period of perhaps nine months, Helen got increasingly restless.

“I really sort of miss my function, I feel that there’s something more that’s coming and it’s going to be something like a workbook,” she said.

I replied, “Workbook? What is that going to be?”

But she wasn’t very specific beyond that. It was just that there was awareness that the *Course* was not complete. Then one day she began to take down the *Workbook for Students*, which consists of 365 lessons, one for each day of the year. And that was the beginning of the second part of the *Course*. That took approximately two and a half years, and at the end of that we again thought that we were finished. But after a number of months, again of not being quite sure what would happen next, the third and final volume was announced as the *Manual for Teachers*. So the total period of time was approximately seven years from the time we began with the *Text*, including the *Workbook for Students*, to ending with the *Manual for Teachers*.

Shortly after we started taking down the *Text*, I was invited to attend a conference on juvenile diabetes in Princeton, New Jersey, sponsored by a foundation. It was an area I knew absolutely nothing about. But for various political reasons at the Medical Center I felt it was important that I go to this meeting. And I thought, “This is very embarrassing, how can I go to a conference in an area that’s totally alien to me?” I was feeling extremely uncomfortable about it. At that point, Helen took down some material, which was not only a part of the *Text* for that particular segment of time, but also a special message for me. It turned out to be extraordinarily helpful for me in attending that conference, and I know it has also been a great help to a large number of people who have studied the *Course* over the years. It appears in the first part of the *Text* in Chapter 2, in “Special Principles of Miracles Workers,” and reads:

*I am here only to be truly helpful.
I am here to represent Him Who sent me.
I do not have to worry about what to say or what
to do, because He Who sent me will direct me.
I am content to be wherever He wishes, knowing
He goes with me.
I will be healed as I let Him teach me to heal.*
(T-2.V.18:2-6)

This message helped me recognize that I did not have to rely on my intellectual defenses in preparing for the conference or anything else. All I had to do was to be aware that I was there to be truly helpful and that there would be guidance and help. Regardless of what the assignment might seem to be, I didn’t have to plan, I didn’t have to anticipate. All of this was very different. I was accustomed to planning, anticipating, having lectures and everything worked out intellectually and ahead of time. Here, I think, the lesson in trust is really what is being emphasized.

However, many times Helen would arrive in the morning and tell me that she thought the *Course* had flipped, that the material was making no sense, and that she was tired of performing her function. But every time that would happen we would sit down and actually type up the material and then read it. All of these questions and qualms would be relieved; the flow of the material remained uninterrupted. It was beautiful, it was profound, and most important of all, it didn’t

seem to ever contradict itself. This appealed very much to Helen's logical mind. I remember a particular occasion very keenly, when Helen came in one morning and was really distraught, perhaps more distraught than I had seen her in some time. This was while we were somewhere in the middle of the *Text*. And she said, "This time it's really gone off the deep end. It's gibberish, it makes absolutely no sense, has no meaning, there's nothing to it. It's absolutely impossible. I refuse to read it to you." After I calmed her down, she did agree to read the material to me. Here's the very end of that section, a very moving passage—a prayer:

"Forgive us our illusions, Father, and help us to accept our true relationship with You, in which there are no illusions, and where none can ever enter. Our holiness is Yours. What can there be in us that needs forgiveness when Yours is perfect? The sleep of forgetfulness is only the unwillingness to remember Your forgiveness and Your Love. Let us not wander into temptation, for the temptation of the Son of God is not Your Will. And let us receive only what You have given, and accept but this into the minds which You created and which You love. Amen."

(T-16.VII.12.1-7)

At that point, Helen burst into tears, recognizing the beauty of the language and the profundity of the thought. In a sense, it was the equivalence of "The Lord's Prayer" for the *Course*. And it made a profound impact on Helen, as well as, of course, on me. As a result, I think that Helen was less conflicted at times after that, when she was taking down subsequent material. But I can't say that her conflict was ever totally over because it kept coming back in various forms and at various times.

Over the nearly three years we worked on the *Text*, the material would come in a rhythm that was sort of erratic. At first there seemed to be a great rush of material and Helen scribed it. But then there were also periods when Helen might not feel like taking it down for several days, even though she felt there was more. She could stall it for a while—for a few days at most—but not for longer than that. It came through in very uneven segments, depending upon her availability. Yet, she would make immediate time for it if she felt it was sufficiently urgent, even taking it down at times on the subway or in a taxi. And frequently she would take it down at home or in the office between work times. It never seemed to make any difference what else was going on. At no time was Helen in a trance or anything even remotely resembling a trance—the flow of material continued without any altered state—but she did concentrate very carefully when she was doing it. She could also turn it off or on at any time, even stop in the middle of a sentence to talk to somebody about something. Then she could start up again exactly where she had left off, without going back to reread what she had written, continuing when she had a moment. I sometimes had the feeling that it was already recorded and she simply was transcribing something that was already there.



Dr. William Thetford & Dr. Helen Schucman

We were together every day as our offices were adjacent, so we could do this between work times. But the most common time, and usually the quietest, was during lunch hour. I would get a “Chock Full of Nuts” sandwich, and we would sit there and do this with few interruptions. At the same time, Helen and I both recognized that it was crucial for us to do our assignment with the *Course* in a way that did not disrupt our work at the Medical Center. We were both extremely busy people. Certainly our work and our commitments to the Medical Center were our first priority, and those obligations had to be respected at all times. Somehow this seemed to fit itself into little odd cracks of time, without any difficulty.

Helen would read the material to me from her shorthand notebook, and I would type it directly. I typed the original and two carbons. When we were finished with whatever transcription we were in—it might be several pages or just a couple—we would then proofread it. It went quite easily after a while and seemed almost automatic. We would just pay attention to what we were doing and not get too involved with the content while we were doing it. We saved that until later. We would try to put aside our evaluative faculties, but at times we would be quite startled with what was coming out. I felt the important thing was just to concentrate on getting it down. Helen was apt to be uneasy if we discussed it. She felt we should get it down and be sure it was accurate, and not try to understand what it meant.

Helen was fearful, I think, of making any kind of specific commitment about this. As a matter of fact, early on she said to me, “You’re responsible for what it says.” She then told me that she was responsible only for its grammatical style and purity. She said that if it made any grammatical errors, if it “goofed” in any way, then she would refuse to continue. Helen split herself off, really, in that way. So we both looked at this material with a rather critical eye as we went through it, looking for any possible mistakes or errors. After I typed up whatever Helen might have dictated during a particular day, we would go back over the copy checking carefully to be sure that we had all the words exactly the way they were supposed to be. Helen, at times, however, was tempted to change a word, but then would recognize that if she did that it would not make sense later. Her integrity in recording this material precisely as it came was extraordinary. Yet, she simply chose not to associate herself with it at that time, because of its high threat value to her. Even so, Helen certainly did know what the material said, and she did understand it.

Challenging Concepts and Applications



Helen & Bill

During this time in 1965, Helen and I also shared a feeling of excitement. Somehow we had found our function. I didn’t know where this was leading, and I had no idea what *A Course in Miracles* meant. Yet, I objected to the title and thought it was embarrassing, awkward, and unscientific. The term “miracle” bothered me. I think it also bothered Helen. The idea of *A Course in Miracles* seemed rather absurd. Yet, when it defined a miracle as removing the barriers to our awareness of love’s presence, it began to make sense. So we had a lot of mixed feelings about it, but also a sense of its importance. We each felt that this was not something minor. I felt strongly that Helen could do this, and I know

that without my constant support and encouragement, she would not have continued. In fact, in doing this together we shared the feeling of being joined in a common purpose, unlike some of our other activities, like writing papers or doing projects at the Medical Center. I had no idea that it would turn out to be a lengthy work or even a book, let alone three volumes. There were no clues. At times we felt this “project” was impossible, whatever the assignment was. In addition, I was experiencing a feeling of frustration, and I had great difficulty working with Helen in terms of understanding the material. We did talk about it, but what I regarded as a challenge for each of us to change our minds; she regarded as a threat, and seemed determined to hold on to her positions. It was hard not to have anyone to talk with about this, as Helen wanted to keep it our secret, something not to be shared or discussed with others—at least not yet. Nevertheless, I, at least, needed a confidant who shared our interests, someone trustworthy and willing to abide by a vow of silence and with a background capable of appreciating the material.

The person who came to our rescue was Calvin Hatcher. He was a hospital administrator with whom I had worked closely on departmental problems in the hospital. When we had lunch together a few months before the *Course* began, Cal told me that he had always wanted to have a friend with whom he could talk about his interest in religion and spiritual matters. That was a surprising thing for him to say as he really didn’t know me well, and he seemed to be exposing himself.

I said, “Cal, I don’t know anything about religion or spirituality and I am not interested. I’m afraid I wouldn’t be the person for that.” So when the *Course* started, it seemed clear that Cal was waiting for it, and I knew he was the person we had to share this with. Helen had a fit when I talked to her about my intention. She was afraid of getting this mixed up with hospital administration. Yet, I knew Cal well enough as a good friend to realize that he would not do anything that would compromise us. I reluctantly got her permission to tell Calvin about the *Course*. Afterward, when I would type up the three copies, I would give Helen the original, keep one copy and give Cal the other each morning.

For several years we met in my office early in the morning, before 8:00, because we had to meet before scheduled activities. I would go over the material that I had typed the preceding day and try to explain it to Cal. This was my attempt to learn what it meant by trying to teach it to him. Cal knew much more than I did about the Bible, which was all very new to me. He had a critical, inquiring mind, and wanted to know what this meant and what the implications might be. This gave me my first opportunity to try to find out what I thought about it. Our talks were extremely helpful and made it possible for Helen and me to continue even when I felt she and I were not learning the material together. It was much more difficult to go over the meaning of the dictation with Helen.

The problem of not learning it with Helen bothered me a great deal. At times I thought we were learning it, but this varied a lot. And at times our relationship seemed to get worse as the *Course* went on. I felt that Helen regarded me as her symbolic threat of the *Course*; I was the guilty person to be attacked. The longer this went on, the worse it got. It was very difficult.

When Kenneth Wapnick arrived on the scene shortly after we finished scribing the *Course*, he was certainly badly needed. Although Ken took a lot of pressure off me, what happened was that Helen became even more hostile toward me. I became the enemy. She had always had a general orientation, which assumed that somebody has to be killed off so somebody else could live. I was up there in charge of the whole department and everything else that was going

on, but I was officially being killed off. She was always giving me double messages, and I found that also very difficult. I didn't know how to deal with it, and I began to feel increasingly isolated.

It was clear that the relationship between Helen and Ken was now a substitute for the long-term relationship Helen and I had. I was partly relieved, but at the same time felt left out. I also felt an increasing sense of fear that was almost panic about this. If we really took this *Course* seriously we couldn't ignore what it said. It kept saying things like, "You, Helen and Bill," which we translated as "the two of you," or "you and your brother." It was very personal so I felt that if we were really accepting this as being true, we couldn't ignore that part. It kept saying that the two of us would make it together or not at all.



Helen with Ken Wapnick

I spent a lot of time trying to talk to Helen about my feelings regarding this. Somehow I felt she and I would have to heal our relationship, as the material suggested. As time went on, Ken tried very hard to be more inclusive, but he didn't know what to do any more than I did. I thought that if Helen and I didn't make it by the time she retired we were never going to do it; it would be the end of our opportunity. That bothered me for a long time and made it hard for me to keep looking at the *Course* and to relate it to my life. The *Course* was something that had come into our lives and had changed them. I didn't know how to deal with practicing it alone. I needed someone to feel related to. Cal was helpful, but it wasn't the same thing. I needed a relationship in which this material and its meaning could be focused. To me, it was clearly supposed to be the relationship Helen and I shared, which certainly badly needed the change as prescribed in the *Course*. I remember telling Helen repeatedly how important this was to me. At the same time, I felt the material had the tendency to generalize, to say it's you and your brother, whomever that might be, not specifically the two of us. It obviously was not referring only to Helen and me. Yet, I felt that no one shared my perception as it related to Helen and me, and I had trouble conveying that feeling which permeated the *Course* for me for many years. I don't feel that anymore. But if I had not been resistant to some extent, of course, I would not have had trouble with it.

Nevertheless, I felt all this came on because Helen and I needed a powerful lesson, both because our relationship was so extreme and because we were so resistant. Very few relationships can be this intense and still continue while spending so much time together. I also played multiple roles for Helen. I was her boss, her fantasy love object, her savior in terms of this material, and I was expected to do everything that had to be done at all times. I was a substitute for her husband, her brother, and her father. I was supposed to make up for her feelings about her father, and what he didn't do in her life. I don't know why I accepted this complicated relationship. At the same time I felt a lot of emotional dependency on Helen, although I was clearly the person in charge. My role wasn't a dependent one in terms of people in the department. I was aware of that. Helen was enormously capable when she was focused. In our relationship, we became so mutually interdependent that it was very difficult for either one of us to function in any other way. That continued even when Ken was there. It was difficult for me to separate the experience of going through all of this from what the *Course* says. It tells you all about peace and love and joy and harmony, and I had the feeling that everything was chaos. Much of the time what I felt was a constant temptation to walk the plank.

One of the reasons this was so hard was that I was also under constant pressure in a very competitive medical center. The game was really kill or be killed. That orientation was pervasive throughout the Center. I was determined not to get caught in it, but there was no way I could really avoid it. It was a delicate balancing act in many ways. I did it as well as anybody, but there was no way to know how to do it, and no way to be happy about it. In time things did improve, and I found it a lot easier to deal with impossible situations. I did learn a lot, too. I learned to deal with these impossible situations that seemed to miraculously work out.

My secretary, Pearl Belowsky, from the Bronx, who was an atheist and very frightened of Christianity, used to say, “Oh, Doctor Thetford has just performed another miracle.” Howard Hunt, who had been chairman of the Psychology Department of the University of Chicago and a close colleague, would say, “There’s Bill walking on water again.” I would get this feedback in different ways. I was aware that I wasn’t doing it, but I was following guidance to some extent. I didn’t really feel peaceful about any of this. I felt as if I was constantly being tested. Much of it was heavily reinforced ego. It was an extreme contrast: the very worst of ego defensiveness on one side, and the *Course* representing the epitome of spirituality on the other. I didn’t know how to deal with this. Yet, that was my project most of the time: “How do I get through this day trying to apply these principles in the face of maximal ego temptation?” And although I did learn a great deal, I didn’t learn how to do it to my satisfaction – or to do it consistently. I certainly was not in a state of peace and equanimity. Yet, I did eventually learn how to improve relationships.

I began by working with some of the colleagues who were closest to me. Where these relationships had been abrasive or particularly difficult, I began to practice the *Course’s* concepts by being forgiving and by not engaging in the game of guilt, attack or defense, no matter what the seeming provocation might be. The essence of *A Course in Miracles* is naturally to change our own perceptions of how we look at the world and at other people. I began to realize that the responsibility was up to me to change my perceptions, not to try to change any of the people with whom I had relationships. For example, one particular colleague who had been instrumental in my coming to the Medical Center was somehow upset by a number of problems that we tried to work on together. And it seemed that no matter what suggestions I might have to offer, they weren’t quite right, and there was a certain amount of bitterness and resentment that increased over time. I reached the point where I had no idea how to improve my communication with him. And when the *Course* came along I realized, well, here’s someone who is obviously waiting to have this tried out on him. If this will work in my relationship with a difficult colleague, then it can work anywhere. And I began to visit him in his office every day. So no matter what he said or did, I simply did not respond to that in my characteristic way. I did not become upset; I did not become defensive or engage in counter-attack, or whatever it might be.

This continued for some time. And one morning I wasn’t able to stop by as I customarily did. I received a phone call and he said, “Bill, are you all right? Are you okay today?” I said, “Yes, everything is fine, I just wasn’t able to come over.”

We ended up going to a departmental conference that was sponsored out of the city. It was customary to share accommodations at that conference. And he came up to me and said; “There is no one I would rather share a room with than you, Bill. Can we do that?”

So that seemed to be an extraordinarily healing moment for both of us. As we later walked down to the cocktail lounge and then to dinner, he stopped by and scooped up a handful of nuts, and said, “Edgar Cayce told me that almonds ward off cancer.”

I couldn't believe that I was hearing this correctly. I said, "You actually knew Edgar Cayce, you met him?"

He said, "Yes." He had been stationed in the Army during the last part of World War II, shortly before Cayce's death, and had had an opportunity to know the Cayce family. At that point there was a feeling of having somehow resolved a long-term problem, and there was an enormous sense of freedom and exhilaration, which continued. Problems between us never came up again.

I was determined that before I left the Medical Center all of my relationships would be healed as well as I knew how to heal them, and I feel they were. I was not going to let any of that ego stuff spill over if I could avoid it. That made an enormous difference to me; I really wanted to change. So many things seemed to be going on at many different levels, both external and within me. I found I could have a holy relationship with anyone other than Helen. I felt that I didn't really know how to do that one. I kept trying, but even now, I can't pick up the *Course* and look at it with the detachment of someone who is coming to the material with no history with it. Despite all that was going on, and despite the turbulence, Helen and I were committed to doing our assignment. It was a sacred trust, something we were meant to do, and we did do it. I felt that we had done our job as well as we knew how, but we hadn't reaped enough benefits and rewards from it. I found that sad. I didn't want to blame Helen, because it really wasn't a question of blame. But I didn't know how to work on our relationship, either.

The Search for Context

At this point I need to digress somewhat to expand on an important phase in the scribing of *A Course in Miracles* that helped give Helen and me, especially me, a better perspective overall. Shortly after we got into the *Text*, I started wondering what else there might be in the literature that was similar to what Helen was scribing. We were obviously doing something very unusual, but I thought it couldn't be unique and that there might be something about mysticism that might be relevant. When I started looking around, I began finding all kinds of books, which seemingly fell right in my lap. I read a lot of material, and I was particularly struck with Vivekananda and his restatement of the Vedanta teachings. Also, the writings of Joel Goldsmith had some similarities to the material. His book *Parenthesis in Eternity* was helpful. There were also similarities in the teachings of Unity Church, but it was not quite the same thing. The *Course* is much more extensive and difficult. I was already familiar with Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy*—which was good introductory material. And, of course, we were familiar with the Cayce material, and I had also read *Many Mansions* by Gina Cerminara, which was about reincarnation.

In line with these concepts and that of reincarnation, and in her autobiography, Helen talks about an image of an ancient priestess—almost prehistoric—who isn't grounded, who isn't quite of this world. There was a white temple where people would come to her asking for healing. But the priestess couldn't deal or interact with these people directly; she needed an intermediary. Her intermediary was a man who conveyed requests to her because he was the only person she could talk to. He was grounded enough to talk with people, but she wasn't. He was her link to the world. People would come for help to this temple, and the intermediary would talk to them and present their problems or needs to the priestess. She would do whatever she did and they would be healed. Helen was very clear that I was the intermediary and she was the priestess. She felt

that somehow this portrayed the relationship we had long ago, maybe in Atlantis. I always found that intriguing. I wondered sometimes if we weren't reenacting it in a different form in this life. My question now is: "Is there anything specifically I need to know now about my function, and what does this relate to?" I wanted to know anything that might be helpful.

Because of this and similar experiences, my intrigue with the notion of reincarnation grew and I started thinking seriously about it. I thought that it really didn't matter about any of this personally; I have never been caught up in the personal aspects of who I was. One night I had a very peculiar conversation with Helen. Out of the blue, when we were working on the *Text* and talking about something totally irrelevant, she said, "Oh, I know who you were. You were Origen."

I said, "What?" I looked Origen up later to find out that he was one of the early Fathers of the Christian church, and regarded as one of its major teachers. He was eventually persecuted for heretical teachings around the time of Titianus in the Third Century A.D. Various charges were raised against him posthumously at the Council of Constantinople, and many of his teachings, which had become unacceptable, including reincarnation, were expunged or censored.



Origen, c.185–c.254. One of the best examples of early Christian mystics and generally considered the greatest theologian and biblical scholar of the early Eastern church, Origen was probably born in Egypt, perhaps Alexandria, to a Christian family. At the age of 18, he succeeded Clement of Alexandria as head of the catechetical school of Alexandria, where he had studied. Between 203 and 231, Origen traveled widely and attracted large numbers of students through his manner of life as much as through his teaching. According to Eusebius, he took the command in Matt. 19:12 to mean that he should castrate himself. Though not ordained, preached in Palestine (c.215) by invitation of the local bishops, but Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, regarded this activity as a breach of church doctrine and ordered him back to Alexandria. Returning to Palestine in 230, Origen was ordained priest by the bishops of Jerusalem and Caesarea. Demetrius then excommunicated Origen, deprived him of his priesthood, and sent him into

exile. Origen returned to the security of Caesarea (231) and established a school of theology, presiding as its headmaster for 20 years. Persecution was renewed in 250, and Origen was severely tortured. He died from the effects a few years later. Although most of his writings have disappeared, Origen's literary productivity was enormous. His theology was an expression of Alexandrian reflection on the Trinity, and, prior to Saint Augustine, he was the most influential theologian of the church. Some of Origen's ideas, such as his thoughts on reincarnation, remained controversial long after his death, and "Origenism" was condemned at the fifth ecumenical council in 553 in Constantinople. Source: *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*.

I also learned that he castrated himself, which I always thought was interesting. I sometimes felt I had some association with that period of early church history, and wondered if it might be related to feelings of anxiety about speaking up. That may be nonsense, but it has occurred to me more than once. I did speak up about the *Course* at a time when it felt very threatening to do that. All these things have multiple dimensions. Nothing is really clear-cut. I only withdrew from this when I thought it was safe for me to do so. I talked about it when I felt it was necessary, then I would leave. Probably a lot of my life has been that way. I do whatever I think is necessary at the time, then I withdraw from it all.

It's interesting what the *Course* has to say about reincarnation: salvation can be found both by those who believe in it and by those who don't. Reincarnation, therefore, isn't an essential concept, because, as the *Course* says, all that we need to recognize—whatever our belief—"is that birth was not the beginning, and death is not the end." (M-24.5:7) However, the *Course* does say that our experience of life is a dream. Reincarnation, therefore, could be likened to a serial dream. For instance, if we are dreaming our reality at present in this body and in this universe, as we perceive it, why could we not have had previous dreams? We seem to have a kind of serial dream-drama. It appeared to me that something like that was probably true, but we couldn't really understand it from our vantage point. The gap is in the perceptual trap, as it were. We could only understand the larger picture from the mountaintop.

In my research of the literature, I had also made an effort to see Eileen Garrett, who at the time was considered the world's greatest living psychic. In 1968 I felt it was important to see her, but I had no idea of how to go about making that happen. She was quite elderly, and retired from any active participation in the world. She never went out to meetings, and saw very few people. But in the back of my mind I knew I was supposed to meet her.

Hugh Lynn Cayce felt that Eileen Garrett was closest to his father in terms of talent, which was high praise from him. I knew that she was still president of the Parapsychology Foundation on West 57th street in New York City, but I had never been there. I had also heard that she was ill most of the time and impossible to meet—that she spent a great deal of her time in Southern France. I thought I would certainly not call her office; it didn't seem like the thing to do. But there was something in the back of my mind urging me to meet her. One day I received an announcement from the American Society for Psychological Research (ASPR) in New York about a meeting to be held in the United Nations Engineering Building featuring a theoretical physicist and professor—he was from Harvard or Princeton—whose parents and grandparents had been mediums. He was also quite familiar with parapsychology and was giving a lecture on mediumship. When I saw this announcement I felt strongly that, "I must go

to this,” even though I never went to ASPR meetings. It seemed strange that I would want to do that. I asked my friend Chip if he wanted to go with me because I thought this was going to be an important occasion.

When I walked in to the meeting I was aware of something different in the atmosphere. A number of people came up to me and talked in a way that suggested that they thought I knew something about psychics or I had psychic abilities. People seemed to be reading my aura and there was a lot of strange stuff going on that I wasn't accustomed to. I sat in the back of the hall and during the speaker's presentation, a woman in the front row asked questions. I thought, "That must be Eileen Garrett," although I had never seen her. I was just sure that this was who she was. Her voice had a slight English accent. At the end of the meeting, I did something that was quite out of character for me. I went up to her, and held out my hand to introduce myself, and said, "Mrs. Garrett, my name is Professor Thetford from Columbia and I think it is important that I talk to you." She had arthritis and obviously moved her head and neck with considerable pain. She turned around and looked at me with total attention, held my hand for a moment and said, "Yes, you must come. Call and make an appointment." I couldn't believe it was all that simple.



Eileen Garrett

I called and went through several secretaries. They sounded rather surprised and said, "Mrs. Garrett doesn't see anyone except very old friends." I said, "She told me to make an appointment." They would say, "Well, we will have to call you back." After about a week or so, I did actually get an appointment. It was February and the weather was awful, which presented a problem getting there. One of the problems also was getting Helen to go with me. She was in a panic at the whole idea and said, "I don't want to see any medium." I had mentioned that Eileen was famous for her mediumship, and that Dr. Ira Progoff had written a book about her, *The Image of an Oracle*. It all seemed threatening to Helen, who was frightened of the idea of losing control and of dissociated states of consciousness. She really didn't want to go to this meeting and couldn't understand why I was pushing it. I said, "This is really a great opportunity. She is the greatest living psychic since Edgar Cayce and maybe she can help us. At least we ought to talk to her." I dragged Helen down there somehow, and in all that terrible weather.

When we did see Eileen, she couldn't have been more gracious. She was lovely and calm. She seemed to have endless time and obviously had a clear schedule. There were no phone interruptions, and everything was taken care of in the background so that we were not aware of the office activities. She tried to soothe Helen. You didn't have to be psychic to see that Helen was upset. Eileen kept patting her and saying, "You are like a fragile little flower." She was good with Helen, and Eileen helped Helen to relax. I said we had a manuscript and had had some unusual experiences. She said that she didn't have to know any details about it, so she really didn't say anything specific. But she did say she would publish whatever we had taken down herself simply because of its source. There would be no question of the authenticity of this material. I was fearful of asking questions because Helen was so agitated. I always felt unhappy about that afterward because I had wanted to quiz Eileen, but I realized at the time that I couldn't. Eileen had been born in Ireland and spent a lot of time telling us about her own background and how she had been trained in mediumship at the British College of Psychic Studies in England. It had

been difficult for her to block out all the static. She was so tuned in during World War I, while living in England that she would be aware of what was going on in France, and it was upsetting and disturbing to her. Later she learned how to focus her psychic abilities so she could turn it on and off, and that seemed to be enormously helpful and reassuring.

This was valuable for Helen later on, and she also spoke proudly about having met Eileen Garrett and what a nice person she was. Probably the main thing that Eileen Garrett told us was that if we went in the direction of the *Course*—if we followed it in our personal lives—we would both be gloriously happy, but if we fought it we would be sick. She repeated that. It was obvious that she saw something about the character of the *Course* even then in 1968. I don't think her warning helped much, but it made a big impression on me nonetheless. I felt reassured that the woman who was considered the greatest living psychic really felt that you had to work with the material and that it came from such a high source. She emphasized that I should look after Helen, but there wasn't anything specific about any of this. She also spoke about her own sense of futility and depression, which surprised me. She had written several books, and seemed to make all kinds of contributions to other people, but she felt that the one contribution she made in her lifetime was collecting her library. She had an extraordinary library and perhaps this was the only thing, which would survive her. I thought that this was curious. People with these extraordinary gifts apparently found it difficult to achieve peace of mind.

After Helen got over her initial shock, we did go back to see Eileen briefly on one other occasion. Helen wanted her to look at some of the *Course* manuscript. We saw her just as she was leaving for France. She died the following year, in 1970. I had the feeling that she wouldn't be around for very long. It was a meeting that gave us the kind of support that was hard to find. I had no idea to whom one might talk about this sort of thing. Later, I would not have felt comfortable going to the Society of Psychological Research in England, but Eileen had been reassuring. Eileen Garrett and Hugh Lynn Cayce were two very important people from the beginning of this process. They gave me a lot of comfort and encouragement.

On another occasion Helen and I went to see the famous English psychic Ronald Beasley, who did aura readings. He said that it was remarkable that Helen and I had similar auras. I arranged for us to see him on one of our visits to London. We stayed in Kent in Churchill's place; it was very interesting. Hugh Lynn had recommended Beasley as being outstanding, probably the best person to deal with auras. He had written a number of books, but was quite secluded and protected by two elderly women who wouldn't let anybody come and see him unless they approved. We went out to their country estate and it was one of those hard-to-describe English experiences. The estate had a large garden and we were served tea, quite formally.



Ronald Beasley

Ronald Beasley was remarkable. He looked at me and said, “There are two times you wanted to go back and not stay here. You were uncertain about this life. Once was in infancy and the other was when you were seven years old.” Both were true. I almost died in infancy. The first week of my life I developed an abscess on my eye and, according to the story, if it broke open on the inside it would have been fatal, but it broke on the outside. When I was seven I almost died again. He even told me that I had a heart condition, just by reading my aura, or whatever he was

doing. He said a number of other impressive things, and so he had a great impact on me. He also asked, “How did you choose your parents? Oh, well, there’s no reason for these kind of choices.” It seemed he could see your whole life history, your parents and everything. He repeated that Helen and I had remarkably similar auras and that it was very unusual to see something like that. We were wasting our time, he said. “You shouldn’t be involved in the university life, you should be involved in healing.”

Beasley practiced healing through a kind of color therapy. He would mentally project colors to people anywhere in America, or wherever they might be. He even gave a demonstration of this while we were there. He asked me to pick somebody that I knew in New York in order to “send to him.” I had given him the name and address of Chuck Williams, who was having a few problems and whom I knew was depressed. He described him rather accurately and then said, “He has some health problems. He’s concerned about having a coronary, but there’s no reason for that.” He described Chuck as having some kind of indigestion, which would be taken care of if he didn’t drink water during his meals but Chuck could drink water after his meals. He also said something about a pain Chuck had in his left leg, which was a result of a car accident or near accident when he was a very little kid. The car had to stop abruptly on a bridge and Chuck was thrown out of his seat. That was the basis for this thing that was bothering him. Beasley had many specific details of this kind. I didn’t know any of this, but when I got back to New York and asked Chuck about it, it all checked out. Chuck stopped drinking water during meals and his indigestion went away. There were many fascinating details. Ronald Beasley was killed in an auto accident. He was very well thought of, and he also believed in reincarnation. I don’t know, but the most parsimonious explanation for many events in my life seems to be that they are a continuation of something else.

The Course is Openly Shared

In the fall of 1970 I met Father Benedict, a Benedictine monk who was one of my students at Columbia. He had come there as a special intern instead of going to a teacher’s college to get experience for his Ph.D. I had worked out a special arrangement with him. One day, in one of my teaching associate’s seminars I made reference to St. John of the Cross. This surprised Father Ben and he stayed afterwards and came up to my office to talk to me. He was wide-eyed when I pulled a book of St. John’s writings out of my desk drawer—actually flabbergasted that I had it in this atheistic stronghold. Here was his psychology professor who was aware of mysticism, and that startled him. Later I told him about *A Course in Miracles*. It was an unusual thing to do in those days. But I knew Father Ben quite well by the time I shared the *Course* with him. He was there on a part-time basis for a couple of years. We talked about many things that were going on in the field that had to do with mysticism. One thing we touched on was Kenneth Wapnick’s doctoral dissertation on mysticism.

In 1972 Ken was a student at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York. I had read the book “Higher States of Consciousness” edited by John White. There was a chapter in it written by Ken on mysticism and schizophrenia. The book gave a little paragraph about the authors. Ken was apparently working at the State hospital. When I mentioned this, Ben resonated with it and said, “Well, I have heard of a Jewish psychologist somewhere, I think it’s there, who has converted to Catholicism. I wonder if this is the same guy?” He checked this out and, of course, it was. Another surprising thing was that Ken’s former wife, Ruth, had worked for Helen and me

on a special project earlier that year. So I had met Ken's former wife before I met him. Ben had found Ken as a result of our conversation about this, and thought it would be nice if Ken and I met. At that point Ken was planning to take off for the Middle East in about a month.

At the time, I was very involved in learning more about healing. I felt that teaching and healing were really what it was all about. Because we had *A Course in Miracles*, which had to do with teaching mysticism, I thought it was important to know about healing. I had watched Kathryn Kuhlman on an early Saturday morning TV program just to see what she was about. She seemed a bit hysterical, but sincere. I had no idea what it would be like to go to one of her performances, but I really wanted to. So I made arrangements for Helen and me to go. We managed to get tickets through the sponsoring agency, an evangelical group called the Full Gospel Businessman's Fellowship. We had to get tickets through some complicated process of buying a package deal. Through a series of circumstances we got tickets in the front row, which was interesting and it was impressive to see what happened from such a close vantage.



Kathryn Kuhlman

It was a highly charged emotional atmosphere. At the beginning, Kathryn Kuhlman came out on stage and went through a warm-up period. She was really coquettish and, to my mind, inappropriate, especially for her age. She wore a white dress and made little jokes, gradually warming up to the audience. This went on for a while and then gradually something began to happen. She became more serious and started talking about the power of the spirit. I was aware



Kathryn performing a healing

of the moment when things clicked—changed. She became quite different; another consciousness had taken over. That was presumably what she was waiting for. It takes enormous courage to get up before thousands of people and wait for that to happen. When it happened, there was a feeling of authenticity about it. She was no longer this sort of silly, somewhat hysterical woman, but a power and spirit that somehow came through. When she started calling out healings in various parts of the audience, people would come and line up. It was amazing; she would just touch people and they would fall over. This went on for hours. Time didn't seem to make any difference.

None of it seemed contrived; it was all quite startling. Some of it may have been suggestion, but I don't think it was all suggestion. It's easy to dismiss this kind of thing, but Helen was very moved by it, too. Helen even dropped all of her blasé defensiveness, and I was quite touched. We felt a tremendous spiritual power that was generated somehow. Kathryn was acting as a common battery, I guess. She was the focal point of this energy. It was very, very impressive. It went on all day, so by the time we left, I felt both exhilarated and drained. That evening we met Ken.

Ken left for the Middle East right afterwards to meditate, and then started sending us postcards. He said he felt guided to come back to New York, which was the last thing he wanted to do. He was in a monastic retreat on top of a mountain in Lower Galilee where he was meditating with two Catholic priests who did the Mass in Hebrew—a rather exotic combination. He didn't want to leave, but felt he was being guided back to see us and the book we had told him

about. So Ken showed up in April of 1973. Helen and I were working desperately on a chapter for the *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*. We were on a deadline and we had to turn out a lot of material. We had decided to cover one personality theorist a week, which was the only way we could get it finished. I was doing all the reference work and Helen was writing the material. It was a big job, and it had to be done well.

Ken surfaced in the midst of all this. Helen and I were both edgy, partly because we were so busy. I also had a lot of other things to do. We were sharp with each other and Ken was appalled at our relationship. Here we had this holy book—this wonderful spiritual material—and we didn't know how to relate together. The two of us were bickering and carrying on in a terrible way. We were obviously not being loving and holy. Ken decided he was going to demonstrate how relationships could be healed. He was going to exhibit perfect love and that sort of thing. He would use his relationship with Helen to show me the power of holiness in action. I was apparently to learn from watching. I thought Ken had a lot to learn.



Ken & Bill

Helen was susceptible to all this attention and massive devotion from Ken. It was amazing. She now had the word of Jesus and the dedication of a “holy man.” Ken thought Helen was sort of the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary. Helen thought Ken was one of the world's greatest saints. She would say things like, “I can't think of anyone in history who was as beatific as Ken.” So I would have lunch with the Virgin Mary and the world's greatest saint. Of course, I was the world's greatest sinner; I was the terrible guilty party. I'm not sure why I was guilty. That was more obscure. But someone had to be guilty, so I was it. Probably one reason was that I was not being loving enough with Helen. I wasn't impressed by the fact that she was the Mother of God. This sort of thing went on for quite a while and I was both relieved and annoyed by it all. However, Ken did go through a number of years of active learning, and it was definitely helpful.



Helen

I was relieved and grateful to have Ken take some of the pressure off me, but I also found it difficult in many ways. I had to find a place for him in the Medical Center—a job—in order to explain him and what he was doing there. We had to put up a certain amount of pretense. It was odd to suddenly have somebody appear and spend all of his time with Helen. I needed to establish a reason for him to be there and I had to determine what he could do. I worked it out so he could be in the department on a part-time basis.

Ken was difficult to know at first. He was always nice. He was going to work on Helen, not on me. It was a difficult triangle when the three of us were together. After some exposure to all this, I told him I couldn't stand it and I thought there was a lot of spiritual grandiosity going on. Further, I didn't think that was the spirit of the *Course* and I was fed up with it.

Ken went back to Israel in June, but not before extracting a promise from Helen that she would come to Israel in August and bring him back. Louis, Helen's husband, had always want-

ed to go to Israel. Helen flatly refused, saying she wasn't going to do it. I was included in this package tour, partly because Helen knew I would get her there. I pushed her to keep her word, and we went.

We arrived in Israel in August of 1973. We met Ken and he stayed with us constantly. He was a marvelous guide and very helpful. We had many adventures that would have been totally impossible without him. We visited his monastic retreat on the mountaintop in Lower Galilee. I had been in Egypt in 1953, when I was working for the Government, and there was the feeling that maybe Helen and I had traveled to Egypt in a previous life. I also got to Israel during my 1953 trip, so I had returned exactly 20 years later, in 1973. That was the year of Israel's 25th birthday.

There is something about that trip which is hard to describe; it seemed magical. We had gone to the place where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. Helen didn't want to go, but I did and forced it. I was quite pushy and felt I had to be. We went out early in the morning and stood in this very desolate area where it was terribly hot. There is nothing there except some ruins and excavations. Suddenly something happened. In this most unlikely spot Helen went through a very dramatic thing. She flipped back in time somehow. She was complaining bitterly about the heat and everything; then she felt a chill as she stood there. It was quite dramatic, not put on at all. She seemed to recognize the place as if she had been there before. Perhaps she had been part of an Essene community. There was a very compelling quality to her experience. She knew the water level had changed and she also noted geographical shifts that she could not possibly have known about in any ordinary way. It was as if she went back into a previous life. Whether that's true or not I don't know. But it was an intense, charged emotional experience and seemed to have great authenticity.

A lot of things in the *Course* seem to suggest reincarnation, even though it is only discussed specifically in the *Teacher's Manual*, which says it doesn't matter. As mentioned earlier, the *Course* does not take a definite stand on this, but there are some things in the *Workbook* and *Text* that seem to imply reincarnation. For example, in Lesson 98 of the *Workbook* there is the passage, "While those as yet unborn will hear the call we heard, and answer it when they have come to make their choice again." (W-pI.98.4:3) "To make their choice again" certainly suggests that "they" were here before.

Another example, this from the *Text*, states that, "The holiest of all the spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love." (T-26.IX.6.1) Ancient isn't just this life. I felt as we were doing it that there was definitely a suggestion of previous lives, and Helen had recalled several possible previous lives. My personal feeling is that it has nothing to do with anything, except for a feeling that as long as I believe I am living in this phenomenal world, I may have existed before, as if in serial chapters. Reincarnation is still within the same space-time framework. At this level, it seems true, although in our higher Self-reality, it is all just a dream or an illusion. Yet, somehow we think we left home, which is the reason we are involved in this experience of life, as we know it. That's a very difficult concept, one I never really felt comfortable with. We weren't in that desert spot very long. It was too hot. But the reverberations from that experience were intense.

I thought it was significant that we were there, although I couldn't get a sense of why. When I had been there 20 years before, I had felt there was something important about spending the whole summer in the Middle East. I had also visited Syria and Baghdad, and I had some

curious sense of identification, particularly with Egypt and Greece. Being in the Holy Land was very powerful. At that time, of course, I was not interested in religion at all and didn't know about reincarnation. I certainly would have dismissed any thought of it. In retrospect, it was almost preparation for what happened later. I felt I was being readied for something, although I still can't really explain it. I had that same feeling in Egypt and Athens and Florence during the summer of the earlier visit. Maybe that was some kind of awakening—not from book learning, but from having been there. I was aware of feeling that, but I didn't know what to do with these feelings, because they didn't fit any of my belief systems. I felt some kind of closure in going back in 1973.

It was also a very difficult period for me. I broke up a long-term relationship, and living alone was uncomfortable. Then I moved to another apartment, after 18 years in one place, and I was actually getting ready to leave the Medical Center. Probably all of that was preparatory. I can't explain what it was about, but it was important. Helen also felt this trip was consequential and that some sort of closure took place.

Sometimes I do things and don't know until afterwards that I feel, "Okay, that's right."

PART III

We got back from Israel in the fall of 1973, just before the Yom Kippur War. Ken and Helen were continuing their "special relationship," which seemed to be going full blast. They also began to work closely together going through the *Course* very thoroughly to organize it into chapters with heads and subheads, and to make certain its grammar and punctuation were consistent. Spring of 1974 was definitely a transition period; I found it depressing. Moving was upsetting, as was the breaking off of the relationship. I remember believing I was alone and feeling that Helen and Ken had their own special thing. I felt isolated. Obviously I had to keep going. There was no gratification anywhere. I just wanted to get through this stuff and find the people who could take it over. The *Course* was completed, with the exception of the glossary at the end of the *Teacher's Manual*. Most of it was finished in 1971. We were also working on the "Psychotherapy Pamphlet." As if on cue, however, and apparently in response to my need to find people to take things over, Judy Skutch arrived on the scene in May of 1975 in the midst of that confusing period of change.



Judy Skutch

Shortly after I moved in 1973, I received a call from Cal Hatcher, with whom I had shared the material from the beginning. He said a friend of his who was in the Greater New York Laboratory System had called and wanted to rent the facilities at Columbia for an all-day meeting on Kirlian photography—an electro-photographic technique that supposedly photographed auras—and needed somebody to clear this with. Since I was a professor and presumably in a position to do something like that, would I talk to the guy? I talked to him, but Kirlian photography was too far out for the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the facilities were not available. I told him that and said, "It occurs to me that you might be better off trying

the New York Academy of Medicine which is on Fifth Avenue and much more accessible for people than Washington Heights. I know the man who is in charge of that, Dr. McCormick. Why don't you give him a call and find out." I thought I had taken care of the matter, so didn't give it further thought.

Several weeks later I got an announcement that the First International Conference on Kirlian photography was going to be held at the New York Academy of Medicine. I thought, "Isn't that interesting?" I also had a funny feeling that I was supposed to attend. I didn't really want to go, so I meditated with Helen and Ken and we asked if we should be present. They were very clear and they both said, "Oh, no, we shouldn't go, but you should." I said, "Okay," and set out on a Saturday morning feeling resentful. It was a beautiful day in May and I thought it was no time to be going to a crummy meeting, but I went. On the way, I kept thinking, "Why am I going there? What is the rationalization at least?" I thought, "Well, I'm really going to see that scientist Douglas Dean." I had heard that Douglas Dean had done a lot of work on paranormal healing, and I was interested in that. I thought he might be a nice person to talk with.

When I got there, I ran into the man I had spoken to on the phone, and he thanked me for suggesting the place. He said, "What can I do for you?" I told him I would like to meet Douglas Dean. He introduced us immediately and we started to talk. I told Douglas that I was a professor at Columbia, which was like "open sesame" for people who were interested in paranormal phenomena. They were always looking for some legitimate university connection. He was very interested in meeting again and pursuing our conversation. I said, "Fine, why don't we have lunch." We set a date, but he called later and changed it, saying that he wanted to bring his friend, Judy Skutch, with him.

This was not the first time I had heard her name. I had seen Judy at an all-day meeting on parapsychology probably a year or so before at Town Hall, where she was the chairperson for the program on Kirlian photography. I thought then, "I really should meet her some time, but not today." I learned later that Jerry Jampolsky, a psychiatrist from California, was there too, but I didn't know about Jerry then. I still had some odd notions about people who did things like Kirlian photography, interesting perhaps, but a bit flaky. I wasn't at all convinced that I wanted to get too close to it. On the other hand, I wanted to have an open mind about such things.

When I asked Helen what she thought about Kirlian photography, she came back the next day and said, "No, it's not light, it's sound." Helen and I actually wrote, through information she received, a rather peculiar shorthand document called "Notes on Sound." She started by putting it in visual language, such as seeing a train going by on a track, or some example like that. She was really talking about an exchange of ions, electrical charges, and so forth. She didn't know the terms, but she was describing phenomena that sounded vaguely familiar to me in physics. I looked up ultrasound after we went through this, and no question about it, she was describing ultrasound phenomena. Helen didn't know anything about this; she was totally unaware of it. The information didn't come in a coherent language. It was as if she was getting some impressions and she was trying to translate them into language. "Notes on Sound" was a very curious thing and went on for a number of pages.

What I said to Helen when I was talking about Kirlian photography was that I thought spirituality had two main aspects in the world, teaching and healing. The *Course* is teaching, obviously, but how does one really heal? The *Course* talks about healing, but in a medical center no one is ever going to believe that anybody had been helped spiritually unless there is some

specific way of measuring the parameters of healing. That's the only way that this is ever going to penetrate. Here we were in a big, prestigious medical center and we had access to a lot of things. Maybe there was some way we could introduce this if we had an objective research instrument measuring the effectiveness of healing, whatever it might be. This, perhaps, is what "Notes on Sound" was all about. It was totally unlike the *Course* or anything else. It's a series of diagrammatic and shorthand symbols for constructing a machine to measure the effects of healing. The instructions were incomplete, but a number of physicists and scientists saw the document and were intrigued with it because much of the information was accurate. They all felt that there was something very real there that obviously Helen didn't understand, but that they knew about. There was even some reference in the document to something that had not yet been discovered. It was not complete, so there were some missing elements.

I put it on hold a long time ago, and decided that there wasn't anything to be done with it. Curiously, it was the only thing like that, which Helen ever did, apart from the *Course*, and she had no understanding of it. Although she felt nervous about it, I realized it was really an answer to my request. It seems strange that it should have come in that sort of aborted fashion, and I just gave up on it totally. Certainly Helen had no interest in any of that stuff, but she did respond unexpectedly to my request. That was an aspect of our relationship that I never understood. It was obvious that I had to ask questions. In some way that permitted her to turn within and let the answer come through.

Actually, I became interested in the whole idea of healing as a result of going to hear Kathryn Kuhlman. And then Helen took down the material on sound. Certainly there was something in these and the other messages with healing as their theme. It did not go unnoticed or unattended.

In fact, about that time, Cal Hatcher introduced me to a young man named Ralph, who was in his thirties and was so badly crippled with arthritis that he could barely walk. He had just come back from the Mayo Clinic where he had been told that there wasn't anything that could be done for him. So Ralph would have to resign himself to not being able to function. He would have to go and live with his elderly parents in Florida. I thought it would be a real challenge to try to be helpful. I spoke to Ken and Helen about this, and neither had ever met Ralph. I had met him just that one time. I said, "Why don't we really try the power of prayer and healing?"

So I started focusing on seeing him healed and whole. I began to experience on a daily basis that he was beginning to regain the use of his hands and legs. In a very short time, after two or three weeks, I called Cal. Ralph did not know that any of us were doing anything, but he stayed in touch with Cal and reported his progress and improvement. He had started riding a bicycle and swimming. Finally, Ralph was totally healed. This was all without any conscious knowledge on his part that any of us were trying to be helpful. Yet, he did report this to Cal. It is interesting how one can go through these things and for a demonstration, get results, and think, "So what?" I never saw Ralph again; there was no reason for me to see him.

Finally, when I told Helen and Ken that we should tell Judy and Douglas about *A Course in Miracles*, she had her usual anxiety attack. I said, "You don't have to do this. I'll tell them." I knew we had to do it. I was using the "Notes on Sound" as a pretext for talking about the *Course*. I said, "Douglas Dean knows about healing, and I think we should tell him about sound. But we can't tell him about sound unless we tell him about the *Course* first, because it won't make any sense." I wanted to do both.

Douglas told me years later that after we had made arrangements to have lunch together, he had a very strong inner prompting to ask Judy to come with him. Usually he had to try calling her a number of times before he could reach her, but this time he got through immediately. She didn't want to come at first, but then agreed to it, provided that the date be changed from Wednesday to Thursday. He was embarrassed about changing the day, but he did, and he and Judy came to lunch with Helen and me at the faculty dining room at the Medical School. That's when we met Judy: May 29 of 1975. We couldn't talk freely there because



Ken, Bill, Helen & Judy



Judy & Helen

we were afraid we might lose our jobs if anyone heard about *A Course in Miracles*, and the Dean of the faculty was sitting at the table next to us. After lunch we went up to my office, and there we showed them the *Course*. We gave a copy to Judy to take home and read. Apparently that evening when she began reading the *Course*, she couldn't put it down and read it the night through. She was overwhelmed with the *Course's* material. Helen and I liked Judy immediately, and we all—she, Helen, Ken and I—became fast friends. Judy's arrival on the scene was both fortuitous and miraculous. She had a very specific role, although we didn't know it at the beginning.

Publication and Dissemination

Several years earlier to help fund research in parapsychology, Judy and her husband, Bob Skutch, had founded a nonprofit organization called the Foundation for Parasensory Investigation. Since the general purpose of that Foundation was to investigate spirit and life after death and since it seemed easy to use its charter, we decided that it should be responsible for disseminating the *Course*. So in 1975, the year that *A Course in Miracles* was originally copyrighted, Helen assigned the copyright to the Foundation.

When we had first met Judy in May, she was already planning to go to California in June to attend a board meeting and to visit Jerry Jampolsky. She was also registered to be in Stanley Krippner's Humanistic Psychology doctoral program in San Francisco. She was eager to have us come to California, too.

When we made our visit in July, Judy had arranged an apartment for each of us in a building at 2000 Broadway in San Francisco. While we were there, she introduced us to a large community of people. Many of them wanted copies of the *Course*. Judy's friend and doctoral advisor, Eleanor Criswell, had a small company called Free Person Press, through which she published student theses. She suggested she make the *Course* more convenient to carry by producing a pocket-sized, four-volume paperback edition using the offset process. We agreed to have the copyright notice under the name of Foundation for Parasensory Investigation and ordered one hundred copies produced.

When we returned to New York, it was soon clear that one hundred copies were not enough for the interest that was growing. Two subsequent printings were necessary.

At that time, Helen and I were uncomfortable about the name “Parasensory Investigation” and the connotation that carried. It was obviously not the right name. The “United Foundation for Inner Peace” was one that occurred to Helen. So the Foundation’s name was changed to “Foundation for Inner Peace” before the first hardcover printing of *A Course in Miracles*.

On February 14, Valentine’s Day, 1976, we found ourselves sitting around Judy’s apartment in New York trying to plan what should be done about formally publishing the *Course*. Various people had expressed an interest in publishing it, but nothing seemed right. One day it became clear that we were supposed to publish it ourselves, but no one had any money for that. However, having made the commitment that we would somehow get the *Course* published, the very next day an unsolicited telephone call came from Reed “Eric” Erickson in Mexico. He said he would be privileged to pay the full cost of printing.



Judy & Bill



Zelda Suplee



Eric Erickson

Eric had heard about the *Course* from Judy’s friend, Zelda Suplee. Zelda was the president of Eric’s foundation – the Erickson Education Foundation – and Zelda was Eric’s representative in New York City. Zelda kept Eric supplied with things that he might find interesting and had sent him a copy of the *Course* in four small paperback volumes. His foundation was interested in metaphysics and transsexual issues. He called from Mex-

ico within 24 hours of the time we made the commitment to publish. He said that he would be privileged to pay the full cost of printing. The first cloth-bound edition of 5000 sets cost almost \$60,000 and he paid for it. That’s how the *Course* was published.

When the books were ready in June 1976, Judy had a special leather-bound set made for Eric and we presented it to him on Helen’s birthday, July 14th. We had a party at the Tonga Room at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. There was even an indoor display of artificial rain. We learned that Eric lived in a mansion in Mazatlán with his pet leopard named Henry. Everybody liked Eric and was grateful to him. We felt it was a wonder that the money had been provided so generously as soon as we had made the commitment. There were all sorts of things that happened like that.

James Bolen, a friend of Judy’s and by this time a friend of ours, published a nationally distributed popular magazine called “Psychic.” It dealt with psychic phenomena and the philosophical nature of life and humankind. Jim had become an ardent student of the *Course* and wanted to do an article and an interview with us for his publication. We didn’t want anything about the *Course* appearing in a magazine called “Psychic.” Not known to us, Jim and his staff had already been searching for a new name for the magazine, unrelated to our concerns.

One day in the spring of 1976, right before the first hardcover edition of the *Course* was published, Judy and I were again in San Francisco visiting with Jim in the magazine's office. Toward the end of the visit I began a side conversation with Jim's partner, David Hammond. That's when David mentioned they had been searching for a new name for "Psychic" and I casually suggested "New Realities." Later, Jim told me that after giving this more thought overnight, the next morning he had announced to the staff that the magazine's new name would now be "New Realities," compliments of Bill Thetford!



James Bolen

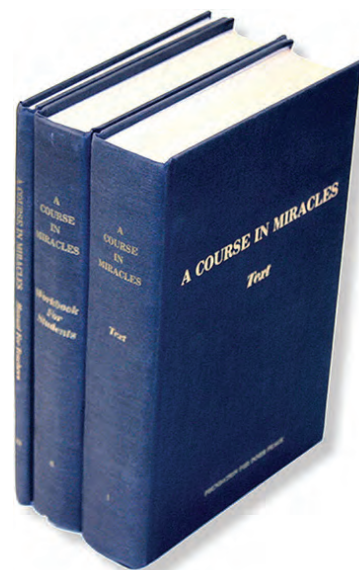


The inaugural issue of "New Realities" was published in April 1977. It contained the first discussion of *A Course in Miracles* in the media and it created quite a stir in response. That was the beginning of intense widespread interest in the *Course*. On the basis of those two articles, we received thousands of letters, inquiries and orders from throughout the USA, Canada, and even from abroad, and we ran out of books. We had to republish right away. I thought it was amazing.

I had applied for a sabbatical leave at least six months before I knew the books were going to be published. My sabbatical was to start in July of 1976, and the *Course* was published in June. When my sabbatical started July first, right after publication, I was essentially free from my university commitments. I never really went back. Had I stayed, it would have been awkward.

It was a threatening period for most of the people who were there. Even many of the tenured professors thought they had to leave, and they did. I was scared of facing all that directly, but by then, everything was eased. I was able to take early retirement from the hospital, beginning in 1978. Since I had started at Columbia in February of 1958, by spring of 1978 I was eligible for retirement—fascinating timing. I found the whole idea of making a radical change very difficult. I had a tenured position and felt insecure about letting it go. I had been there a long time, and in my mid-fifties I found it hard to make changes. Academic positions are not easy to come by. I thought I was taking quite a chance in letting go of the security and income, and I didn't expect the *Course* to be a source of financial support—we never thought of that at all. Yet, eventually it did happen and it took me a long time to even be comfortable with the idea of living on funds from the "Foundation for Inner Peace."

While I was making the arrangements for my sabbatical, I realized I was not going to have enough money to live on that year. I remember thinking, "Well, maybe the thing to do is make some money on the stock market." I figured I would need around \$10,000. I took a chance and bought some options on IBM. I didn't have the money at all, and no one in his right mind



The first edition of *A Course in Miracles*

would do anything like this; it was extremely risky. But right after I bought them – the same day – the stock began to shoot up. I made the \$10,000 I needed within 24 hours. If I had held onto the options another day or two I would have made more, but I sold them as soon as I made what I needed. I think it was a sign of reassurance. Even though we had *A Course in Miracles*, it was very difficult to have a shift in attitude. We had the *Course*, but we were living as if we didn't believe it. It was hard to let go of old patterns. I had not grown up aware of the *Course's* ideas, and Helen's fears, of course, were enormous. I had to take care of my fears and then I had to deal with hers, too. Somehow it all worked out.

I moved out to Tiburon, California, in June 1978. Although I had been there before, I wasn't sure about any of this. When I was ready to make the move, a place seemed to be waiting. One day when I walked around the corner from Jerry Jampolsky's residence in Tiburon, where I was staying, I ran into a guy I knew in the next building. I asked him, "Neil, do you know of any apartments for rent around here?" He told me that there was one in the building next door, which they hadn't been able to rent. I looked at it and it was perfect, near Jerry's and within easy walking distance of everything in town. It was the only living space I looked at, and in several months I moved all my stuff from New York. It was obviously time to relocate.

The next four years were interesting. Judy and Bob Skutch had received guidance to move from New York City to California also. They settled in Tiburon, a few doors away from Jerry and me. We all lived in a row and met every morning to read and study the *Course* together. Judy and Jerry had a close but rocky relationship. I had my own tensions. Judy had been traveling a great deal speaking about the *Course* around the country. She suddenly moved for a while to Washington, D.C., and it seemed I was there to be helpful to Jerry. I didn't have any goals or ambitions. I thought I had left all that behind. Then we decided to do this silly book of cartoons, which I thought was kind of dumb. Jerry had a publishing contract from Celestial Arts, but his manuscript wasn't in publishable form. So I helped him with that. Years previously, during one of my trips to London with Helen, a psychic had told me that I would do something like that. In 1970 another psychic also told me that sometime in the future I would be living by the water. I saw several psychics. One psychic saw me living on the water and writing children's books. Another said, "I see you riding around Sausalito. You are spending a lot of time there." She didn't know California at all, and also mentioned water. That was long before I had any notion that I would be living on the water in Tiburon helping Jerry with his cartoon book.



Bill & Dr. Jerry Jampolsky

Reflections on Relationships

I kept feeling that my relationship with Helen must have started long ago. We seemed to pick up where we left off at some other time. We were wearing different costumes, but it wasn't the beginning of the connection at all. Besides Helen, I have felt that with certain other people—Chuck Lehman was one. I have known Chuck now for 30 years. It takes a lot of time to stay in touch with someone every week. There's a closeness between us that transcends any rational explanation. It has nothing to do with anything, except that we are very close.

As for Helen's husband Louis, he is a unique person, and I came to know and respect him as a friend. He is also a sensitive, perceptive man. While Helen was around, he was quite ambivalent about the *Course*. He seems to have released all that now. He was very devoted to Helen, and she to him. Louis once told me that one of the profound experiences of his life, that made him believe in the reality of some of "this *Course* stuff," happened a number of years ago when he called me one day and said, "I would like to see you privately." I remember that particular occasion quite well, because of what took place. It just occurred to me that Louis needed at least \$1,000. Without any further thought, I wrote a check to have ready for him so that when he arrived he wouldn't be embarrassed about asking for it. When he got to my office and started telling me about having some temporary difficulties with his business. I said, "I thought maybe you were having some problems, so here it is." It blew his mind. There was no possible way that I could have guessed this or the amount, since he hadn't said anything to me. After that the whole thing about minds being joined or ESP or mysticism suddenly took on reality for him as a possibility. My relationship with Louis was easy and compatible; we had no difficulties between us that I can remember.



Helen & her husband, Louis

On the other hand, my relationship with Helen was so complicated. I think I learned from it that love would persist despite everything that seemed to block it and interfere with it. I was aware of feeling close to Helen at some level that transcended rationality and transcended relationship barriers. It seemed to go against any form of logic. I wasn't that fond of Helen, but there was a deep love that continued in spite of everything. It had nothing to do with anything. It seemed to represent our joining in love and cooperation. We tried to do something that transcended our egos. That was the thing that seemed real, the only thing that seemed to really persist. Once having done that, there was no breaking away from it. It was a commitment that went on forever. If love is eternal, once you make that kind of commitment, you have made it. It doesn't have anything to do with the usual things about commitments. It all seemed so confusing at times. Love and hate, patience and disaster, everything was all jumbled up.

We had lots of opportunities to practice forgiveness in our relationship. This always reminds me of the passage in the *Text* about Easter, which is so lovely:

"Easter is not the celebration of the *cost* of sin, but of its *end*. If you see glimpses of the face of Christ behind the veil, looking between the snow-white petals of the lilies you have received and given as your gift, you will behold your brother's face and recognize it. I was a stranger and you took me in, not knowing who I was. Yet for your gift of lilies you will know. In your forgiveness of this stranger, alien to you and yet your ancient Friend, lies his release and your redemption with him. The time of Easter is a time of joy, and not of mourning. Look on your risen Friend, and celebrate his holiness along with me. For Easter is the time of your salvation, along with mine." (T-20.I.4:1-8)

That's really the Easter message. Easter is the season for offering the gift of lilies in place of a gift of thorns. The lilies symbolize forgiveness. I used to do this on occasion; I would send Helen some lilies. It was important to remind each other to practice forgiveness.

After I moved to California, daily calls to Helen were really my test. Our relationship was still a big challenge. I tried not to react to whatever she might say and, although it took a long time, eventually that did work. Something authentic would usually come out toward the very end of our phone talks. The conversations often didn't make any sense at all, but the important thing was we were extending love. Sometimes she would sound very different, very tender, before I would hang up. This was authentic. I didn't understand it, but it was there and I was aware of it. I didn't want to see her in the last year before she died. I felt I could sustain this devotion better from a distance, and that it was better for both of us to stay connected that way.

After Helen died in February of 1981, a lot of people sent me messages from her. I didn't know what to think about these things, except that I do now know that the ego, the persona, can't be eternal. There is something which underlies all this, however, which is real—behind all the masks and costumes and serial dramas. I've had the opportunity to experience things out of time because I've let go of time boundaries. It's like looking out on the water from my apartment in Tiburon seeing the boats go by and experiencing a real sense of timelessness. I guess too, sometimes, we also really have to go to the ultimate despair in order to break through—at least I did. That may be the only way I can learn. I felt I had to struggle with everything, including the *Course*. It was very hard for me to be on this path without the notion of struggle, which seemed so predominant, but I did loosen up a bit.

The attraction of guilt and fear of love has been a leitmotif—a dominant recurring theme—throughout my life, as it is with many people. It seems difficult to give that up. It struck me very forcefully when I first heard it and typed it: “*The attraction of guilt produces fear of love,...*” (T-19.IV.A.i.10:1) Suddenly I realized that was really what it's all about. If we weren't attracted to guilt, we couldn't possibly avoid love. If we still go around in these negative states, pushing away the one thing that everybody really wants, love, then we are attracted to guilt. I felt that that sentence expressed the whole problem. When people asked me what I thought the *Course* was trying to tell us, I would say that's where we all get stuck. If I didn't feel so stuck in that area myself, it wouldn't be so clear. It is totally obvious now. But, even though it was now unambiguous, it didn't mean that just because I understood it, I was necessarily free from still choosing against love. I thought it was amazing that I could see so clearly and yet, the same thing kept coming up. I had to leave the whole New York ambiance and go to a totally different setting to begin to let go. It was very difficult for me to do that. I was so dedicated to working things out there. But I'm delighted to be in California; for me, California is wonderful.

Recently, in preparation of moving to another apartment, I opened a box of memorabilia and started through it. I found samples of absolutely everything, like reprints of old papers going back over thirty years and a report I had written when I was studying Chinese methods of brain-washing. I had interviewed a man and his family in Canada in a remote village area. The man had been captured by the Chinese and had gone through a long interrogation. I was supposed to find out what that was like. I also found a certificate that the War Department presented to me for my work on the atomic bomb, as well as some scattered personal notes from the *Course* that Helen and I had taken out. There were also some old birthday cards that Helen had written and pictures of both my parents. It was a review of “This is Your Life,” going back to the middle 1940s, all jammed in a box. I found my reaction very strange. I was sad, and obviously had resistance to looking. I threw out a lot of it in preparation for the move.

So in cleaning house, I reviewed all the madness that one accumulates. I'd like to get down to two shirts and a pair of pants. I have too many books. Part of my fantasy is having a lending library. So I've been looking at various scattered fragments of my life, recognizing how nothing seems to fit, particularly depending on how you look at it. I found my Ph.D. the other day, and it is somehow related to the atomic bomb, the CIA and everything else.

One of the documents I found was some material I had taken down with Helen that obviously did not belong as part of the *Course*, but were notes that went along with it:

“Tell Bill he is right in providing you with the consistent strength you need to get and he needs to offer. Your instability and his weakness have resulted in bad karmic choices, and your relationship now is crucial for the future. You must both exert every effort to restore it to what it once was. Both of you are correcting where you have failed before. This has already enabled you to fulfill a very unexpected role in your own joint salvation and the salvation of many other children I will entrust increasingly to you. These are by no means chosen at random. Bill should know that his preparation is not only in terms of sharing the results of your better application of some rather unusual talents. His own role, which he will understand after his preparation is complete, will be equally surprising. He will need your help then as you need his strength now.”

I don't know what this means. I suppose this doesn't have to be in the body necessarily. Still, I don't know whether some of it has happened or not.

“Note that you do not need his help as a scribe because you have developed this ability by your own efforts and finally placed them at my disposal. By lending you his strength, he strengthens himself. When he gains this through his own efforts, he will need your help in a very unexpected way, but this is just another example of the reciprocal nature of miracles. Scribes have a particular role in the plan of atonement because they have the ability to experience revelations themselves and also to put into words enough of the experience to serve as a basis for miracles. The role of priestess was once to experience revelations and to work miracles. The purpose was to bring those not yet available for direct revelations into proper focus for them. Heightened perception was always the essential priestess attribute.”

Here for the first time, Helen said she would be honored if there were any notes taken:

“Your earlier acute problem in writing things down came from a much earlier misuse of very great scribal activities. These were turned to secret rather than shared advantage, depriving it of its miraculous potential and diverting it into possession. This is much like the confusion of sex impulses with possession impulses. Some of the original material is still in the temple. This is why you became so afraid about Atlantis. Bill has his own reasons.”

I'm not sure how much of this was a result of having read some Cayce material at that time. Looking at this in the context of the intervening years, I wondered, “What remains to be

done, and what role is it I have yet to fulfill?" I felt a certain nostalgia and a sense of feeling scattered about my life, although if I look at it another way, it all comes into focus. I don't feel sad about it now, but I did yesterday. House cleaning is good, but I have the feeling that there is something that I don't want to look at or something is missing.

This material obviously didn't belong in the *Course*, but I typed whatever came along. There were a lot of these personal messages. This "equally surprising" thing that I was supposed to do, maybe I did it, but it doesn't seem like it. Maybe all my resistance and death wishes were a part of not wanting to do it. I have felt that I have had enough for one lifetime, but somehow the feeling persists that it isn't over or completed. That has kept me going as much as anything else. There is something more to be done. I don't think it has to do with media events or television or anything of that kind. At one time, a long time ago, I felt it had something to do with healing. I have to heal myself, obviously. And it is also obvious that the *Course* is for teaching as well as for healing. Somehow both functions are called upon. They aren't really separate, but the emphasis might be different.

I think that the crucial area of application of the *Course* is in relationships. It is in relationships that we can demonstrate a change of mind. Talking to a large audience doesn't make too much difference. Some of our beliefs and assumptions make the whole thing seem at times like a soap opera.

The Meaning of It All

At the time *A Course in Miracles* began, I would have termed myself an agnostic. I really had no interest in formal religion, but I was also aware of the deficiencies in the psychological systems of thought with which I was familiar. I recognized that somehow the emperor had no clothes. There were so many of us going around expounding our various theoretical points of view. But there was no one who really knew how to put this together in a meaningful way to change the nature of our lives.

When the *Course* began, I started to recognize that the true emotions, fear and love, which it talks about with such great wisdom and insight, were really the only two emotions that mattered. If I could learn to let go of fear, I would automatically experience love, because that is our natural reality. As I continued to practice letting go of my own defensiveness, I became aware that the *Course* is really about undoing. It's about forgiveness, about forgiving ourselves and others for the mistakes that we have made. It's about not holding on to these errors in a way that increases our sense of guilt and unworthiness. If we remain as God created us, then we are, of course, always worthy. In this sense, "sin" can be seen merely as a mistake that needs to be corrected. On the other hand, if we believe in sin in the traditional sense, then we believe in guilt and punishment. A mistake, however, is something that can always be changed and corrected. Mistakes do not call for guilt or punishment, but rather for forgiveness, for love and for miracles. That's one of the fundamental concepts of the *Course*, which has been extraordinarily helpful to me and to a lot of other people.



Bill

While Helen and I were working on the *Course*, I also kept wondering where this material fit in with the world's dominant metaphysical thought systems and religions. I thought the spiritual aspects of the *Course* made tremendously good sense. Since my own background was extremely deficient, I immediately started looking for books on this subject. As mentioned earlier, I really didn't have to look hard for these books, because they sort of fell at me, literally. Somehow, wherever I went, there seemed to be books that were relevant. This is also why I was able to read a great deal on mystical literature, East and West, and became familiar to some extent with the Vedanta teachings of the Hindus, the work of Aldous Huxley and his "Perennial Philosophy," Buddhist teachings, and the like. As a result, I soon became aware that there was a universal teaching that had some similarity to the *Course*.

But although I found that everyone seemed to be talking about some similar concepts, there was no way that I could really pull them together. What I found in *A Course in Miracles*, which seemed to me to be quite distinctive, was not only an integration and synthesis of all of these concepts—East and West—but also a practical way of actually practicing and applying the concepts in one's life. And to me that was very different. I kept thinking, there must be something else around that's like this. Yet, I wasn't able to find it. Nothing else, for me, integrates it all with the kind of clarity, which the *Course* offers. The *Course* not only offers a clarity of exposition in developing these concepts in the *Text*, it also provides a very specific tool or technique for learning the material. This precise learning program is offered in the *Workbook for Students* with its 365 exercises, one for each day of the year, and the *Manual for Teachers*, with its personal guidance and clarification of terms.

A Course in Miracles, therefore, is a guide to personal and spiritual transformation. It is based on the belief that there are two distinct thought systems. One is referred to as the world of perception, which is this world. The other is called the world of knowledge, which is the world of God and which does not require any action on our part. As a matter of fact, the world of knowledge is ineffable—it just is—and it's something we cannot describe, but we can experience it. The world we live in everyday, the one we are caught up in, is the world of perception. It is the world of change or flux or fear or guilt, a world of constant chaos. And it's here that change is possible, because it is possible to look at this world differently. The *Course* is designed to help us become aware of and practice our way out of the world of perception and into the world of knowledge through a series of very specific exercises offered in the *Workbook*.

The *Course* also makes a very major distinction between the two emotions that we experience. I remember being tremendously impressed when that distinction was originally made in the *Text*. It said, "Fear and love are the only emotions of which you are capable." (T-12.I. 9:5) It goes on to say that "...one you made and one was given you." (T-13.V.10:1) When I read that, I resonated with a tremendous sense of "Of course!" All this complexity that we have introduced in psychology trying to devise hierarchies and lists of emotions is really not the best way to understand or deal with them. There are really but two emotions—love and fear. That's why if I feel angry, it's because I first felt threatened or obviously fearful. I couldn't be threatened if I had not experienced fear. Now that is true of almost all of the so-called negative emotions. Most of us go around talking about wanting love, but holding on to our guilt and fear merely blocks our awareness of love. Love is always there; it doesn't change. It is simply awaiting our recognition and our decision to take down the blocks to its presence. So I think the *Course* makes a very big distinction between these two emotions in the exercises that we practice. We're gradually taught to leave fear behind, and accept love as our natural inheritance.

I really think that if the teachings of the *Course* were widely practiced, there would be an end to war. There would be no reason to attack anyone because we would begin to recognize that all of this is stuff that we made up in our minds. We would know that we are misperceiving. “Projection makes perception...” (T-13.V.3:5); we look within first and then we look out. So the enemy is not out there. The enemy is really our own needs and desires and frustrations that we attribute either to someone else, or to some nation or to some institution, whatever it may be. The truth is that we don’t change anyone but ourselves. And I know that that’s a very major job. But in changing ourselves, and by changing the fearful way we look at other people, we have already made a contribution that I don’t think we can estimate in terms of its value. There’s a kind of ripple effect. As I change my thoughts and attitudes, it has an impact on the people who are near me and it helps them. I think this is true for all of us. That it is a cumulative way of trying to shift our perceptions from fear to love, from war to peace, by definitely practicing this. I think that this is what Mother Teresa is trying to do in her own way, and the power of that little lady is quite obvious.

Although there are a number of features like this in the *Course* that are certainly distinctive, it becomes obvious that the major emphasis is on forgiveness, which is pervasive throughout the three volumes. Forgiveness is the one thing we are asked to do if we want to wake up from our dream—the world of perception and fear. Somehow we have to learn to forgive others and ourselves and to let go of our belief in a reality of guilt and fear. In fact, the *Course* is very explicit about the importance of forgiveness and unequivocally states, “The way to God is through forgiveness here. There is no other way.” (W-pII.256.1:1-2) The emphasis is also very much on doing this here and now, in the relationships in which we are involved. It is by healing these relationships through forgiveness and by recognizing that we cannot really progress unless we have made every effort to release and let go of our negative feelings about ourselves and others, that we awaken to God.



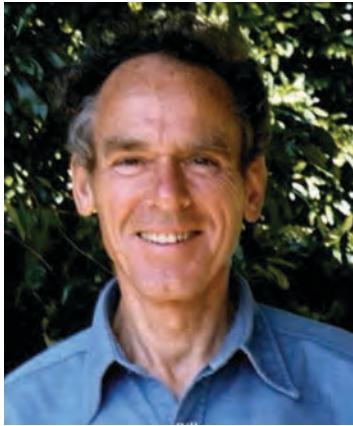
Bill

It’s heartening, too, to realize that we are not asked to do this by ourselves because God is ready to help us anytime we’re willing to be helped. All we have to do is ask. Invariably, the help we receive from God is seen or experienced as a miracle. “You are entitled to miracles...” (W- pI.77.1:1), no matter what your mistake or need.

As the *Course* explains in the 50 “Principles of Miracles” in the beginning of the *Text*: “There is no order of difficulty in miracles. One is not ‘harder’ or ‘bigger’ than another. They are all the same. All expressions of love are maximal.” (T-1.I.1:1-4)

It’s important to also understand that a miracle is not something supernatural at all. As a matter of fact, miracles are very natural and when they don’t occur, something has gone wrong. As stated, a miracle is really an expression of love; love is happiness. So the *Course* is also about our being happy. Happiness is really experiencing joy and making it a consistent part of our lives—naturally—not something that we feel guilty about grabbing at odd moments. The *Course* says that our reality, our natural reality, is joyous and loving. But we taught ourselves some very strange and alien notions. So a great deal of the *Course* is really unlearning the harmful things that we have taught ourselves which stand in the way of feeling happy and joyous. As we begin

to let go of this interference, which we made up, then we begin to experience what is natural for us. And that can only be loving and joyful. It's a profound set of books, and I find it quite difficult to try to summarize what all this material is about.



Bill

A question that often comes up about *A Course in Miracles* is: “Why did the *Course* come when it did, and in a Christian format?” Just before Helen began scribing the *Course*, she received a series of related thoughts that addressed the question’s first part. As she states in her autobiography, “The world situation was worsening at an alarming pace. People all over the world were being called on to help and were making their individual contributions as part of an overall, prearranged plan... Because of the acute emergency, however, the usual slow evolutionary process was being by-passed in what might be described as a ‘celestial speed-up.’” Helen was called upon to do her part by scribing the *Course*, and my part was obviously in partnership with hers.

In another special message that came to Helen prior to the actual *Course* material, which addresses the question’s second part, there were some statements that Christianity was no longer particularly Christian due to the many distortions that had crept into our understanding of its concepts and teachings. Because of this, there was now a need to define some of these concepts and terms in a way that would be more meaningful in a contemporary fashion. This is what the *Course* attempts to do—to really restore what I think was the original meaning and message of Christianity. Yet, it does it in a way that combines spiritual and psychological insights, and, in a way that is decidedly ecumenical.

So even though the *Course* uses Christian terminology, it conveys universal spiritual truths, which is perhaps why people of different faiths can and have found it of value. In addition, for those who find the Christian terminology and its masculine format detracting, many have found that using the word “Spirit”—a wholly natural and androgynous term—resolves any problem. I think the *Course* states it very well when it says, “A universal theology is impossible, but a universal experience is not only possible but necessary.” (C-In.2:5) In this spirit, the *Course* does not discuss institutional religion and does not advise anyone to give up membership in whatever faith one professes, whether symbolized by church, temple, synagogue, mosque, whatever. Instead, the *Course* calls for a spiritual joining and a willingness to let go of a sense of separation from each other and from God. So I’ve been impressed with how ecumenical the *Course* is; its purpose is not to increase our sense of separation but to bring people together in a loving, egalitarian way.

As to the inner voice Helen heard as being that of Jesus, I think both Helen and Ken felt that they had much more of a personal relationship with Jesus than I did. And I always found it difficult to pinpoint the *Course* in terms of a specific person. If one talked about the Holy Spirit or Jesus or Christ or Higher Authority, whatever the term might be, it seemed to me that we were talking at a level that was beyond conceptualization. And I couldn’t really pinpoint or identify that, except that I knew it went way beyond our egos. It had nothing to do with our ordinary state of consciousness and awareness. So I think I was perhaps more hesitant to talk in very specific Biblical terms.

As for the future of *A Course in Miracles* itself, I have no reservations about that due to what I consider the miraculous events of its beginning and how very far it has come since then. It has grown in readership at an extraordinarily fast clip. There are now well over a million copies in circulation internationally, with tens of thousands of people involved in study groups all over the world. I feel that anything, which is a statement of truth, naturally, will have a very wide audience. Yet, the *Course* itself states in the *Manual for Teachers* that it is only one of many approaches to truth, that it is “a special form of the universal *Course*,” and that “There are many thousands of other forms, all with the same outcome.” (M-1.4:2).

Finally, as for myself, personally, the *Course* changed my life totally. I’m still practicing the material. I can’t claim that I have any day that I’m totally free of slipping back into fear thoughts. But I do know the difference now and I think I’m able to respond more quickly when a fear thought comes up, maybe even be able to laugh at it. Which is perhaps the effective way of dealing with many of these imaginary fears that we have devised in our lives. I can truthfully say that the *Course* has gone far beyond anything I could conceivably have imagined, and I’m delighted. Anything that can be this helpful to so many people and me obviously belongs in the world with the widest possible distribution. I know that Helen and I were both pleased that we could play our parts in this. Many other people have continued to play their parts in disseminating the ideas and the concepts of the *Course* in so many different areas. So I hope that *A Course in Miracles* will help lead us to a greater sense of harmony and love in our own personal relationships, to a keener awareness of how it might be possible to be at peace with ourselves and with others, and to real peace in the world.

* * *

Bill was interviewed in 1982 and out of that came this life story. Those of us that knew him saw a remarkable change in him from 1982 up to his death in 1988.

BILL — The Final Years

Bill lived another 6 years after he completed writing his “Life Story.” He continued to study and practice the *Course*. His ultimate progression to a state of joy and peace was visible.

In 1981 Bill was not in good health. He needed surgeries to repair a carotid artery and required help in recovery. Patricia Hopkins, a close friend, graciously assumed this role. She and Bill lived together between 1982 – 1986. Today, Patricia describes Bill as kind, gentle, introverted, with immense integrity and a delightful sense of humor. She recounts that during the years they shared, she and he spent an hour daily with friends, (Frances Vaughn, Roger Walsh and Jerry Jampolsky,) reading from the *Text* and doing a *Workbook* lesson. Bill also attended another, weekly, *Course* meeting. Every night he would peruse something from his metaphysical library. “This end-of-day reading was almost a ritual. It was something he would never neglect to do, even if we had been out for the evening, and it was late when we returned home.”

By 1986, Bill had become very close to friends living in La Jolla, California. He made the decision to move there alone as he was yearning for a less structured life. Much of the following

information is taken from another close friend's book, Carol Howe's *Never Forget to Laugh*, which chronicles Bill's life including the final years.

In La Jolla, Bill joined a daily *Course* group, run by the fun-loving couple, Jack and Eulalia Lockett. As Bill's inner work continued, a more playful, lighthearted Bill emerged. It was as if he were finally reliving the childhood he never had (due to his rheumatic heart.) Defenses he had taken on, as an academic, an intellectual, and as co-scribe of the *Course*, began to fade. He shed those roles and became more carefree. Even his homosexuality had more spaciousness. In Carol's book she says, "Bill possessed a quiet but intense magnetism that impressed and attracted woman as well as men. His past lovers as well as casual friends were loyal and respectful to the end."

He always had a marvelously developed sense of humor. In his earlier years, Patricia Hopkins felt there was also a poignancy beneath this humor, as if he were weighing the value of staying alive. But in these final years, he blossomed. Jack Lockett relates Bill's 65th birthday party "as a pinnacle of Bill's experiential phase. That day Bill participated with verve and charm, allowing close to 70 people to tell him how much they appreciated him, and he, in turn, proceeded to hold and hug each one of them for over a minute." Accepting such a public embrace was something from which he once would have fled.

By all accounts, and from many witnesses, at the end of Bill's earthly life, he had become more of a participant in it. He was flexible, joyous, and free. Much of his humor now stemmed from recognizing fear's lack of substance and the absurdity of taking himself too seriously.

Bill became aware that he no longer needed to escape from anyone or anything, but could simply set aside an upset as a nightmare without appeal. He chose not to be imprisoned. He allowed grievances, fears and old habit patterns to be dissolved, and now experienced the truth of his being. In adopting the goal of "a better way," he found himself on a route leading straight to the heart of Love Itself. What he had helped Helen scribe for the world, became his pathway home.



Bill



EPILOGUE

By Judith Skutch Whitson

On July 4, 1988, Bill was visiting my husband, Whit, and me in Belvedere, California. We were going to have a Fourth of July party to honor Bill. About 36 of his friends were coming.

Bill arrived from San Diego the afternoon before. Dr. Gerald Jampolsky picked him up at the airport. When they arrived I noticed Jerry's startled look. He was gazing at Bill with amazement. Bill greeted me with such high enthusiasm; I was also astonished. It was so unlike his usual persona, which although friendly, was reserved and somewhat stiff. When Jerry left I had to get to the bottom of the mystery. "Bill, what happened to you?" I asked as he danced around the room. He lifted both arms in joy as he swayed to his own inner music. "I am free, I am totally free!" he exclaimed. Whit and I prevailed upon him to tell us what was going on and he let us know, beaming all the while, that he had no more guilt, no grievances and that he had forgiven all his relationships and himself. That was a tall order. "How long has this been going on?" I asked. "Oh, a few weeks" he answered. It seemed important to get to the source of this important shift in attitude. "How did you accomplish this?" we queried. Bill explained that after years of practicing *A Course in Miracles*, he seemed to have made up his mind irrevocably that there was to be no more delay. He called all the people against whom he harbored resentments and



Bill

conveyed to them his erroneous sentiments and asked forgiveness. "It was easy," he said. Everyone was delighted to hear from him and indicated there was nothing to forgive. Knowing Bill very well, my husband and I presented a verbal checklist of the people he had called. He gave us an account of his corrected perception of each one of them. Then came the grand finale. "What about Helen?" I asked. "Do you feel complete with her?" Bill's eyes misted and he became suddenly serious. He then described a vision he had a few nights before where he joined Helen in a state of timelessness and she appeared smiling as a glowing priestess in a long white robe. She extended her arms to him; her blonde streaked hair was lit with a beautiful glow. Their hands touched and he felt the internal words, "Healed, Healed, Healed." He said, "I loved her so much, and my gratitude was beyond limits."

We spent the rest of the evening marveling and Bill explained to Whit that he was finally “flexible” (or, perhaps, given the punster that he was, “flexi-Bill”.) He was referring to a term from the Personality Assessment System on which he and Helen had worked for many years. In that context, he was conveying to Whit—who shared a deep interest in that psychological tool with him—that there had been a dramatic shift in his personality. We certainly could bear witness to that.

The next morning during breakfast, I noticed that Bill was still glowing with joy. “Well,” I asked him, “Do you still feel free?” “Of course,” he replied. “Isn’t this the Fourth of July?” A short time later I invited him to go with me to the market to get a few items I needed for the party we would be having later that day. He decided to let me drive there while he would take his morning walk and meet me at the store. I must have frowned, thinking that if he were to be late, I would have little time to get home to prepare. Always observant, Bill soothed me, “Don’t worry. If I don’t come, just go home without me.” Suddenly I froze and a chill ran through me. Feeling very moved I put my arms around his waist and my cheek on his chest. “Bill, I will never go home without you!” I remember telling him.



Bill, Judy & Whit

Bill left for his walk; I got my car keys and told my husband I would return soon. As I got into my car I saw a paramedic truck pulling up to the house next door. I then saw Bill lying on the ground, face up, with the surgeon who lived next door by his side. I walked over in a daze and was told that Bill crumpled over and died instantly. I was in shock as the arrangements were made to take him to the hospital for final observation. Whit came out and we accompanied Bill to a light-filled room to sit with him. We called some of his closest friends to come for prayers. Drs. Jerry and Diane Cirincione Jampolsky, Drs. Frances Vaughan and Roger Walsh and we sat with Bill’s body and chose selections from the *Course* to read out loud. We sat in quiet as we thanked him for his love, friendship and great service.

Much too late to cancel the afternoon party, we returned to our home in disbelief, to arrange for the gathering. We told guests as they arrived what had happened and everyone decided to say something about their esteem for Bill, as an impromptu memorial. They were all reflective about the dramatic change we had witnessed in Bill. The dinner was quiet as friends reacted to the day’s events. We congregated on our lovely balcony on the Bay overlooking San Francisco. Suddenly, the night sky was filled with fireworks. How appropriate, we all agreed: Bill goes out in a blaze of glory!

Did Bill actually experience “The Happy Dream?” Did he complete his function here and was his relationship with Helen healed? Had he finished his practice of the *Course* successfully, thus answering his quest for “another way?” Whit and I came to the conclusion that, yes, he certainly had. At the last, Bill was in a state of forgiveness of himself and the world; he was filled with the light of love and he demonstrated a supreme joy and peace.

“You will first dream of peace, and then awaken to it. Your first exchange of what you made for what you want is the exchange of nightmares for the happy dreams of love. In these lie your true perceptions, for the Holy Spirit corrects the world of dreams, where all perception is.” (T-13.VII.9:1-3)

“There is no gift the Father asks of you but that you see in all creation but the shining glory of His gift to you. Behold His Son, His perfect gift, in whom his Father shines forever, and to whom is all creation given as his own. Because he has it is it given you, and where it lies in him behold your peace. The quiet that surrounds you dwells in him, and from this quiet come the happy dreams in which your hands are joined in innocence.” (T-29.V.5:1-4)

Thank you, dearest Bill, for letting us all share this miracle with you. May you and Helen know perfect Oneness.

For more information about Bill’s life, you might want to read [*Never Forget to Laugh*](#) the biography written by his friend, Carol Howe.