

MANY VOICES

WORDS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM TRAUMA & DISSOCIATION

Vol XIV, No.3

June 2002

ISSN1042-2277

In This Issue:

Get a Life PLUS Therapy!

Finding Balance Within

Special: "A Man's Story"

Butterflies are Free

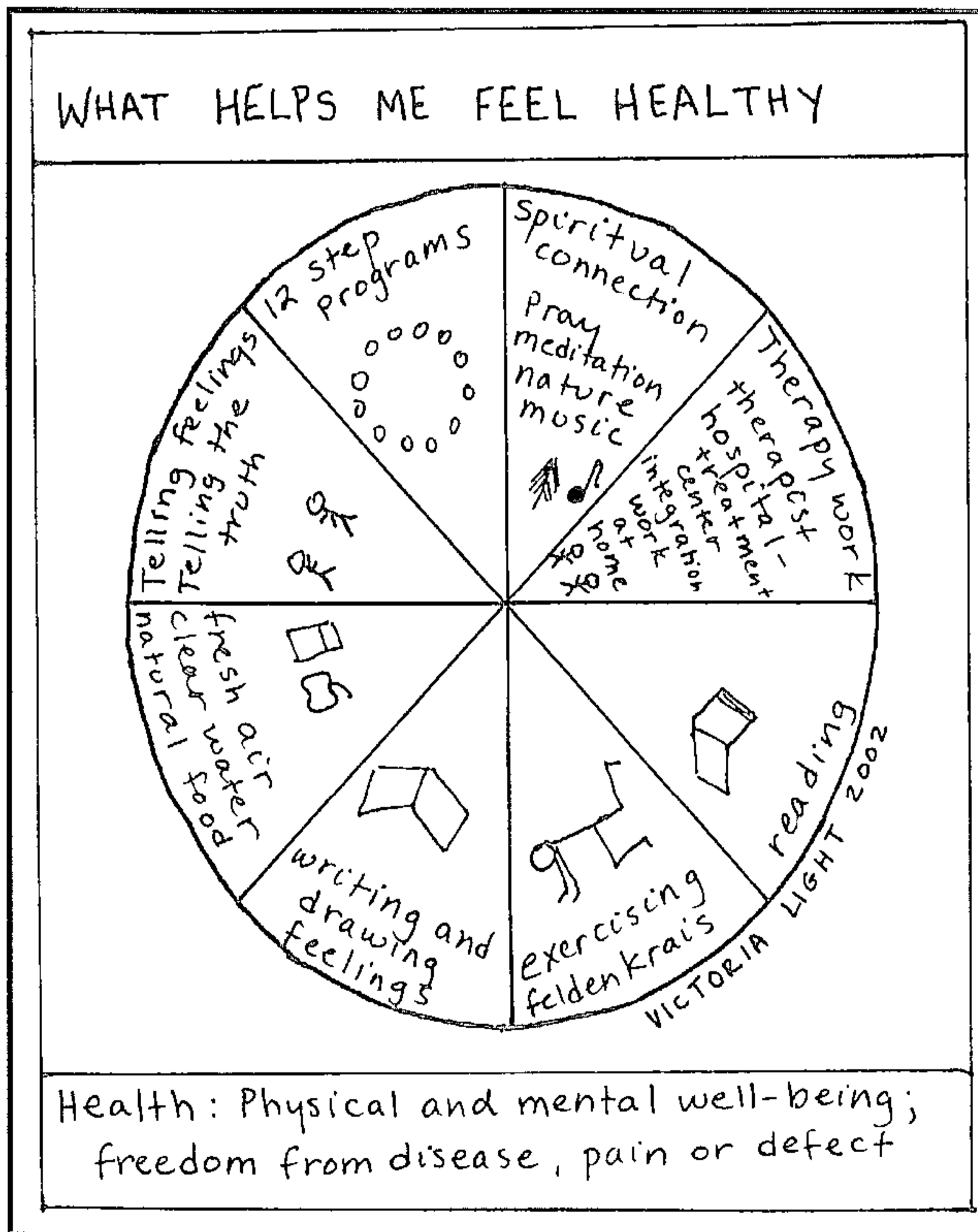
The butterflies are free!
 Their patchwork
 colored wings released
 into the morning sky
 Some have already reached
 the distant rainbow
 flying on gentle breezes
 adding new colors
 rejoicing in harmony
 with god
 and the universe.

Others are still in flight
 testing wings
 crashing to the ground
 and finding bandages
 lingering in the meadow
 experiencing all of the seasons
 in a meadow
 bursting with the colors
 of life
 Taking flying lessons
 from angels.

The butterflies are free!
 Their
 wings colored
 with joy and sadness
 despair and hope
 fear and peace.
 Accepting the darkness
 of much of their journey
 Greeting the light
 Saying yes to life
 Celebrating "birth days"
 Embracing love.

By Hannah D.

MV



Should Miracles Purr?

By Lynne of Augusta

What do you call that source of the Ultimate Answer? Whether you are most comfortable saying "God" or nature or sub-conscious, whatever, I wonder as many before me must have asked whether there have been created answers for us which we decided were too simple, and so overlooked them.

I have an instance in mind. I've personally tried eighty-nine traditional medicines from aspirin to narcotics for this thing called "migraines". Each medicine or combination of them was tried for at least six months.

I've had eight years of psychotherapy (diagnosis: MPD/DID plus manic depressive or bi-polar problem). I've tried acupuncture, pressure-point injections, tapes of instruction on feedback for relaxation, countless diets, attempted hypnosis.

Hospitalizations: I've been in six times over twelve years for "pain study and relief," twice for de-tox from narcotics, I've had MRIs, CT scans, sleep and stress studies, even a year of shock therapy in hope of relief. Psychotherapy with carefully screened medications is helping best.

In short, everything I have known or a reputable doctor has recommended, I've given a whole-hearted try. I can't honestly say anything does more for the actual pain than the basic dark room, cold compress routine. If you can, keep b/p and hyperventilation down, and be grateful for what relief you get.

As inferred before, the nearest to relief I've ever come was so simple I almost missed it, a gift from God-by-whatever-name, in the form of a baby kitten so young that his eyes still had that out-of-focus blue-grey to them. He was mostly mouth!

Evidently someone had thrown him out along the highway and one of our animals carried him in. He hid back among the canning jars, refusing to be touched that first few days, spitting and hissing when we got near. Bread

soaked in milk disappeared, though, so after awhile we put on gloves and lifted him out, a pound or so of pure fury.

Our dogs, a little old corgi and a nervous collie-mix backed into the next room; they'd never been around anything like that before. Old mom cat was curious at first, then turned up her nose and wanted nothing to do with it.

Why he ever decided of all our household creatures great and small that I was his I will never know. Harsh with pain more often than I like to admit, I'm hiding from light when you'd think Little Guy would be looking for action, yet time after time my restless fingers find him near by.

We call him Button because of those eyes. We call him the devil because of his delight in tormenting the dogs and Ma Cat. Kitchen chairs become jail cells through which he reaches out to grab a beautiful tail passing by; anything dangling out of reach is fair game for attack.

When my sister calls the dogs for a treat after our meals, he comes to get his...first. The dogs have learned to watch him, though. He sits on hind feet like a prairie dog to take the treat offered, and if he doesn't care for whatever, you can almost hear him say, "No, thanks. That must have been meant for the dogs." They grab it before it hits the floor, while he sits as

though saying, "Well?" Anthropomorphism? On our part or his?

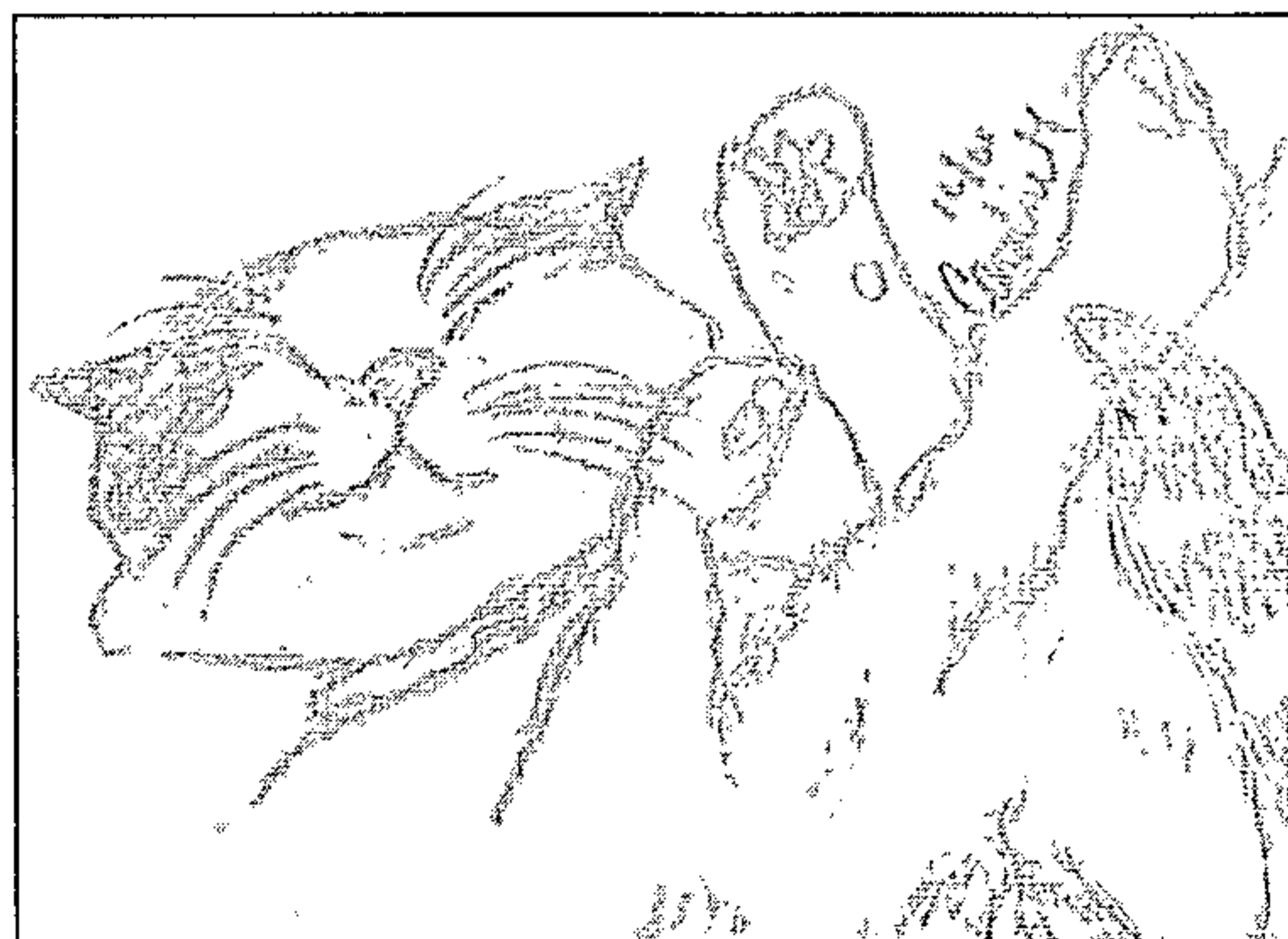
Every migraine sufferer knows that tendency to pant when pain reaches a point of peaks of tiny yellow flashes of lights; sometimes the last thing eaten comes back up; you're afraid of something unnameable. At that point if you're luck the system shuts down and nature relaxes you into unconsciousness; you slow down whether or no. It's no fun.

This strange little wildling does the oddest thing just at that point and I've no way of knowing why. If the syndrome strikes at night, or if I'm lying down, Button comes up along my neck and shoulder right below my right ear where the pain is throbbing. He proceeds to do what is called "april-kitting"—dancing in place on those dainty front paws—right over that carotid artery!

I have learned a very strange thing. If I slow down my breathing, drop my b/p, loosen those muscles one by one, Button slows his tread to a purr, then an occasional purr, then the tiniest kitten-sized snore in my ear. As long as I can keep him asleep, my body will not seize up to the black-out point.

Now, explain that to me if you can.

MV



Never Alone

If you believe, you are
Never alone.

If you have faith, you are
Never alone.

If you are at peace with
Your inner self you are
Never alone.

If you have true friends you are
Never alone.

By Patricia R.

MV

I am here at the highest point of the City Cemetery. It is so peaceful and quiet here and the feeling is serene. I must say that I am here under false pretenses. I told my partner that I was going to a memorial service for those killed and injured by the terrorist attackers on September 11. I decided, however, that I needed to be alone to think and ponder things. So I am here instead, among many who have died normal deaths and perhaps others who were killed by more violent means. I feel the spirit of those lost around me, and of those killed by the terrorist attackers, and my thoughts are with them and those who have been left to grieve and pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. I myself am trying to do the same at this time, for I feel deeply that my life has been fragmented and perhaps shattered by terrorism of another name and kind. It is to that which my thoughts are now drawn.

There are children inside me who live in the past, and lately their terror and sadness have been added to my own. They are afraid that the terrorist of our past will hurt us still today, and I tell them, and myself, "He is dead and buried and can no longer hurt any of us. Feel God's love and peace and know that with His help and the help of others, we will make it through this alive and well." One of the large markers here has a quote from my



MANY THANKS TO OUR ANGELS!

Del Amo Hospital - Torrance, CA

Call Chris McMillin: (310) 530-1151 or (800) 533-5266

Forest View Hospital - Grand Rapids, MI

Call Bill van Harken: (616) 942-9610 or (800) 949-8439

River Oaks Hospital - New Orleans, LA

Call Martha Bujanda: (504) 734-1740 or (800) 366-1740

Timberlawn Mental Health System - Dallas, TX

Call Christie Clark: (214) 381-7181 or (800) 426-4944

Two Rivers Psychiatric Hospital - Kansas City, MO

Call David Tate: (816) 356-5688 or (800) 225-8577

These organizations are not affiliated with this publication and have no control over its contents. Many Voices and its staff have no influence on their operations.

If you know of clinics or conferences that need flyers, please call us!
We appreciate your support! — Lynn W., Editor

September 23, 2001

favorite poems by Robert Frost. My mom sent me a copy of it when I was troubled and having a hard time at college. The marker is dedicated to the Jacobson family. These are the lines that have always touched me and given me some hope and strength: "The woods are lovely dark and deep, but I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep."

We, all those inside me including myself, have promises to keep and have to go on in life despite the past. The woods of our life experiences are lovely and we have many good and beautiful things in our life. Though life is sometimes dark and deeply painful, we need to appreciate its loveliness and go on, because we have miles and years to go before we sleep. We need to look to life's beauty and find that beauty within ourselves. The darkness and deep fear and pain of our past has to be remembered to some extent, and we have to be strong and brave in an attempt to get rid of these bad and terrible feelings and memories. There is hope and happiness in our future, and this is very important for us to remember when the darkness, terror, fear and sadness creep in on us. Nothing in life that is of great worth in having is easy.

We need to be strong and come together for support from one another.

If you, those children and young ones within me, will entrust those memories to me, I will take care of you. We will find peace and happiness as we work through them and let them go. I promise you that no one can hurt you when you give those memories to me. We will be safe and kept in the hollow of God's hand. I will protect you and I will work as hard as I can to help us find peace and feel safe and happy.

Now go to your safe place knowing that you are safe. He is dead and gone from this life and he will never hurt us again! I will do the same and try to go forward in life by remembering the beautiful things in life, and the promises I've made to you and myself. I love you all and want to thank you all for saving my life and keeping me safe. I will do that for you now, keep you safe and help you find happiness. Many people love us and we need to love ourselves. "I love you, hear you, and I'll see you," as we always say. Go and be free in your safe place, now.

Love you all--Merry C. B.

This is dedicated to my partner who has loved me and been there for me though good and bad times, and to my therapist Mindy who has worked with me for many years. Through her patience, encouragement and insight I have finally reached the point where I can face the past. Thank you to you both.

MV

How We Strive to Have a Life!

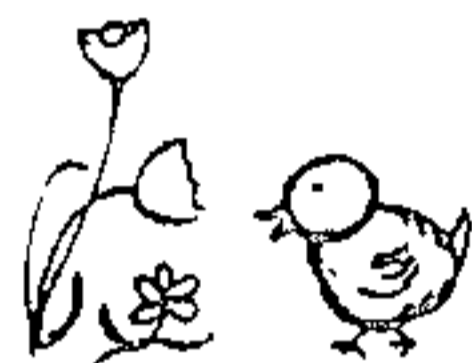
I find it very important to "have a life" apart from therapy and MPD/DID-centered activities.

We weave, write, invent, do handwriting analysis, make other art and craft projects. We sell what we make.

We do Bible study, go out with friends, learn a lot from TV shows, visit nursing homes and send encouragement cards to prison inmates.

Life is so much more than abuse and recovery; reaching beyond our pain brings so much joy to us that we do it more and more.

By Sally B.



Music has always been a big part of my life. When I was very young (before the abuse) I have fond memories of listening to music with my supportive grandmother and my understanding grandfather. After my mother married by abusive stepfather, music helped me to separate, float out of my body and enabled me to find a safe place to reside until I was alone and relatively safe "for the moment."

When I began hearing "voices in my head" music was a way I used to file and categorize memories...memories that I understood, and memories that I didn't understand.

After the abuse ended, music helped me to cope with pain and loss, and yes...even "forget" the abuse until I was a safe place, emotionally and physically, and I/we found a professional PhD and his partner, a female social worker...Together we worked to first retrieve lost? forgotten? memories. Then music was a catalyst to sharing memories from the baby to the children to the adults, within.

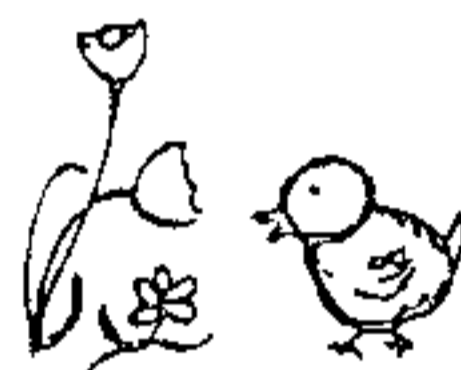
And throughout the years of therapy, music "just plain helped." It helped the process of integration. Music helped me to communicate with the children inside, music soothed me through each learned memory. Music gave me hope through the grief process which

continues to this day and will be with me for the rest of my life.

Many years between the time when I was kicked out of the house of origin (or the house of horrors) and before, during and after "the therapy years" my significant other would come home and I would have different types of music blaring through the different corners of the house, and every TV on in the house, all tuned to different stations. I don't think my significant other ever understood...except that somehow it calmed me, and it seemed to relax me.

For me, integration was not my "end point" in therapy. Integration flowed in me and through me, throughout my life. Music has given me hope...hope for "better things to come", hope for "happily ever after," and hope...

By Sally/Shirley



I decided years ago, not long after I entered therapy for dissociative disorder, that I was not going to let "mental health patient" be my epitaph...or my primary focus in life. After all, I'd already survived a few decades without that label, and there was no reason, I figured, why I couldn't push on for several more decades and have some fun along the way.

So, very early in therapy, I began building in "having fun."

My ideas of fun range far and wide. I read a lot of fun stuff (not therapy-related). I especially like humor books, cartoons, and escape reading that has no pretense of being serious, such as P.G. Wodehouse. But I also read serious books on subjects other than psychology. When I can, I read the New York Times. This reading helps me to see what else is going on in the world beyond the inside of my head. I like to read biographies of people I admire, to see what they did to get where they got, and what they endured along the way. I've learned that many successful people had horrendous backgrounds. They figured

out solutions. And sure, some of them were lucky, too...but most important I think is that they did not give up or throw in the towel when things got tough. I've learned determination from them.

I also like funny movies and animated cartoons. Occasionally I like serious movies, but I avoid heavy-duty bloodshed. I go to the cheap movies, or borrow videos from the library, because I don't have a lot of dough.

Another fun thing I do involves "fooling around" with art. I go on binges, buying paper, paint, sculpting material, you-name-it. I'm no great artist, but I have a wonderful time messing with this stuff. Once in awhile I do a piece that's decent enough to hang on a wall.

If you think you can't do art, you're wrong. Make a point of locating an exhibit of what's called "Outsider Art"...then you'll know you can do art too. I met a fabulous artist in Mississippi, L.V.Hull, whose whole house and yard is a work of art. She has a stack of painted tires by her porch, and she paints shoes on sticks, in place of flowers. LV puts paint on everything imaginable. The day I met her she was decorating boll-weevil traps...and she's happy and proud of her work. I bought a couple of her pieces as I passed through town. One is the tray of a highchair, I think; it's painted all over with polkadots of different colors; there's a hand-lettered message on it that says: "Be Yourself. Who else is better qualified?" I have that plaque hanging on my wall. It really inspires me.

Also for fun—and health—I enjoy cooking. I do it as a hobby, and the only problem with this is that I often make too much for me to eat by myself. So I share it with others, when I can, or I freeze it, when I can't. Right now I'm aiming a little more toward the veggies, and backing off from the pies and cakes...but whenever I need a pie, or a loaf of bread, I tackle it fearlessly. And most of the time it comes out great.

I'm also a flower-nut. Unfortunately, I don't have my own house, but I live in

a first-floor apartment, and my landlord doesn't mind if I do the yard. So I plant herbs and all kinds of flowers and bulbs. I even plant perennials—the kinds of flowers that come up year after year. I don't care if I move away and leave them. I figure I'm improving the place and making my neighbors happy. I learned to do this without regret when I lived next door to a man who had an enormous rose garden, with dozens and dozens of roses. Skyler spent every waking hour that he wasn't at work taking care of those roses...He lived in a 4-family, and I assumed he owned the building. But then he told me no—he just rented an apartment like the other folks did. He got so much pleasure from those roses—which he bought and paid for (no landlord-discount or anything). People from all over the community would walk or drive by and admire his yard, and talk to him about his flowers. He was a bachelor in his seventies, but he was never alone. His flowers brought friends to his door.

Other things that keep me “in balance” include going to free events at the local college, going for walks,

listening to music and radio shows (I try not to miss *Prairie Home Companion*), visiting outdoor festivals with friends or by myself, and going to museums. I also stay in pretty close touch with my two children, who live far away. We usually touch base with each other about once a week. This would not happen, except I call them...and I don't gripe to them about “why don't you call?”

And I've always tried to keep some social life going, even when therapy was rough. I've managed to keep friendships over the years by “dumping” my sadness selectively...I'd give one person dose A, and another person dose B, and I always, always make sure to ask my friends how their lives are going and what is up or down in their existence. I remember that old saying “Don't marry anyone with more problems than you.” I am not sure that is a fair or just way of looking at life, but it is true that if I spend all my time telling people how miserable I am, pretty soon I won't have anyone around me to listen. Negative energy is contagious and wears you down. Positive energy attracts people and

while there are times it is easier said than done, it can be “manufactured” with practice. Often, when I am especially down, it is better for me to stay alone and find the positive in nature or in books or exercise before I go to reconnect with other people. By getting myself out of the worst-dumps on my own before I go gripe to someone, I am able to keep my griping and whining under control.

Another salvation for putting myself in that “better mood” is my journal. I dump all the bad stuff there, and then move on. If I want to recapture that feeling for some reason, I just turn back a few pages and there it is. But it's out of my head so I can go on to find something more pleasant to do.

Anyway, that's a sample of what I do to “have a life.” But it's just a sample. The things people can do to have a life are endless. You can probably think of fifteen or fifty I haven't mentioned. Many of these activities cost very little, or nothing, but they bring sheer joy. And for those of us in recovery, sheer joy is a necessity. So go out now and get you some!

By SuzyQ

MV

Developing Trust Inside

By Susan and Friends

When it was first discovered that I had MPD/DID in 1994 the diagnosis overwhelmed me. My sexual and physical abuse started when I was three and continued many years. When I became aware of the amnesia spells it was frightening. I felt unstable and that I couldn't trust myself to function normally.

After listening to a few therapy sessions on audio tape (which I couldn't remember because my alters were doing all the talking) I knew that my goal of integration wasn't going to work if I held back. My alters needed to tell the stories they have held for over thirty years.

After finding out about my system, and the role each alter played in my traumas, Bruce (my therapist) and I felt that whoever wanted to come out and talk could do so, without restriction, provided they were in the company of those who understood them. Each alter had to be taught to confide in only a few who were trained and trustworthy.

As new personalities would appear, we immediately assigned them duties each

were capable of carrying out. This kept them busy and anger was channeled in a constructive way.

The kids liked to draw and color so I provided them with paper, crayons, kids' scissors, and finger paints...lots of things to help them with the expression of feelings.

My ten-year-old, Brianna, was a good musician, so she was given her time to play her instruments and express herself through her music.

Another alter, Allandra, who is in her thirties, is a counselor and knows much about counseling and psychology. Bruce uses her to assist in the therapy process because she knows what everybody is feeling and sees things objectively.

I only had one alter, Thor, who wanted to cut and harm my body through misuse of prescription drugs. Paige was a protective alter. Once we introduced them to each other, the self-abuse stopped. At first I still resisted, wanting them all to just go away, because I was sure this disorder would ruin the rest of my life—but common sense told

me “they” had already been helping me through life and things were okay.

By showing my alters I trusted them to continue taking care of me, they learned to trust and see that life was more than pain and suffering. The abreactions reached a manageable level and therapy went smoother.

I learned to love each one for whatever they revealed. My “friends” did not need judgment, nor discouragement. They needed to be loved and know they had an empathetic ear to hear about the pain they went through.

Some have gone on now giving back my memories—bad and good. Life is good and surviving means Being Alive!

Learning to trust takes a plan of action. courage is built by taking a step at a time. Freedom is seeing you've learned to trust and fear has been dissolved.

Thank you for your wonderful publication. It has been instrumental in my healing process.

MV

Therapists' Page

Yoga and the Healing Journey-Part 2

By Lauren E. Smith, PhD, CYT

Lauren Smith, PhD CYT has studied yoga since 1992 and comes to yoga with a background in community activism, theatre and spirituality/theology. She is the Protestant Campus Minister for the George Washington University and the Associate Pastor at Western Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC. (Editor's Note: Part 1 of this article appeared in the April 2002 edition of Many Voices)

Exercises, Continued:

Healing Our Heart

The love, spaciousness, and open quality of fourth chakra is related to the heart. When we open our chest and ribs, both front and back, we begin to experience love again: love of oneself, love of life, love of another. Cobra Pose or Bhujangasana helps us here.

Lie down on your stomach. Keep your legs together, arms at your side, close to your body, with your hands by your chest. Inhaling, slowly roll your shoulder blades down your back, and raise your head and chest as high as it will go. Keep your buttocks muscles tight to protect your lower back, and your pelvis should always remain on the floor. Imagine taking your chest, your heart, to the opposite side of the room, opening it up. Breathe several times and then come down. Repeat as necessary.

Reclaiming Our Voice

The throat area is the home of the fifth chakra. This is the place of creativity, speaking of truth, as well as neck and throat problems. I like to do an exercise called, Yes-No-Maybe with my students to help bring awareness to this area.

Sit cross-legged at the edge of a folded blanket or firm pillow with your hands on knees. Focus on your breath. Keep your spine straight and push the sit bones down into the floor. Allow the knees to gently lower. Gently take your chin towards your chest on an exhale. Then on an inhale, raise your chin towards the ceiling. Go back and forth a few times, nodding "yes." Keep your throat relaxed and your shoulders down. Then, come back to neutral and with an exhale, slowly take your chin over towards your right shoulder, keeping it parallel to the

ground. Inhale. Exhale and take your chin over towards your left shoulder. Go back and forth from shoulder to shoulder, slowly shaking your head "no" (you can stay on one side for a bit longer if it feels tight to you). Finally, on an exhale, take your right ear towards your right shoulder and stretch your left arm down towards the ground, stretching the left side of your neck. Come back to center and drop your left ear towards your left shoulder. Go back and forth a few times, perhaps motioning, "maybe!" Come back to center. Change the cross of your legs and do the entire set again.

Clearing Vision

Imagination, visualization, dreaming, and sight are all aspects of the sixth chakra. What we see has a powerful impact on our lives, and our eyes are constantly bombarded throughout the day with fast-moving images. The eye asanas described here can help relax the eyes and broaden that area of our body and psyche.

Sitting cross-legged as in the previous posture, imagine that there is a big clock face in front of you. Keeping your spine straight, with your sit bones firmly on the blanket or pillow, keeping your head level as you imagine that 12 o'clock is up above your forehead, 6 o'clock down below your chin, 3 o'clock over past your right eye, and 9 o'clock over towards your left. Then, breathing gently, take your eyes up to 12 and then down to 6, back and forth, moving slowly, stretching the eyes. After a couple of times, take them back and forth to 3 o'clock and back to 6 o'clock, slowly. Then take your eyes up to 12 and begin stretching your eyes around your imaginary clock to 1,2,3,4,5 and so forth. Once you get to 12, shut your eyes very tightly, and breathe. Open

them again to 12 o'clock and go counter-clockwise, to 12, 11, 10, 9, etc. When you come back to 12, close your eyes tightly. Then slowly open them. Change the cross of your legs. Next, sitting tall, rub the palms of your hands together very vigorously, creating lots of heat. When your palms are very warm, place them over your closed eyes and let the heat soak into them. This is called "palming." Imagine that this heat is healing your tired eyes and loosening tight, strained eye muscles. Do palming 2-3 times to soothe your eyes.

Awakening

The seventh chakra is about awakening--awakening to our true wondrous nature, awakening to possibilities for the future, awakening to a present that is full of wholeness. Savasana, or Corpse Pose, helps us to be still and be present in this ever-unfolding awakening. Possibly the most important posture, savasana is as deceptively simple as Mountain Pose. The goal is conscious relaxation.

Begin by lying on your back, feet slightly apart, arms at your sides with palms facing up. Close your eyes and take several slow, deep breaths. Allow your body to sink into the ground. Try focusing on a specific part of the body and willing it to relax. For example, start with your feet, imagine the muscles and skin relaxing, letting go and slowly melting into the floor. From your feet, move on to your calves, thighs and so on up to your face and head. The simply breathe and relax. Stay in the pose for at least 5-10 minutes. To come out of Savasana, first roll gently with an exhalation onto one side, preferably the right. Take 2 or 3 breaths. With another exhalation press your hands against the floor and

lift yourself up, letting your head be the last thing up.

Namaste

At the end of each yoga class, we say Namaste to one another. Namaste, another Sanskrit word, roughly translates as "The light in me greets the light in you. When we are in that place, we are one." Namaste acknowledges that each person is a beloved and unique part of the universal design, thus yoga is individual for each person. And Namaste acknowledges the Divine inside each of us, as we honor and welcome one another on the journey. This is truly transformational. This is truly yoga. Namaste.

Lasater, Judith. *Relax and Renew: Restful Yoga for Stressful Times*. Rodmell Press, Berkeley. 1995.

Cope, Stephen. *Yoga and the Quest for the True Self*. Bantam, NY. 1999.

Desikachar, TKV. *The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice*. Inner Traditions International. Rochester, VT. 1995

Iyengar, BKS. *Light on Yoga*. Schocken Books, NY. 1979.

Judith, Anodea. *Eastern Body. Western Mind*. Celestial Arts, Berkeley. 1996.

MV

An MPD Limerick

There once was a girl who wore braces,
Who lived in so numerous places.
Then her therapist said,
And it filled her with dread,
"I think that you have many faces."
She struggled for years with those
creatures
Who had such mysterious features.
Until that cold day
When she happened to say,
"Doctor, these parts are our teachers."
So into the world they did come;
Not all, but certainly some.
And by telling their part,
they helped free her heart
From the blackness that kept her
quite numb.

By Paula H.

MV



DID and Denial

By Donna and The Others

Sometimes the hardest part of having DID for me is that I forget that I have this disorder. Not seeing it is one of the main characteristics of this condition. It feels like such a struggle to remember. All my energies want to run in the direction of pushing my Parts and the memories they hold far away. It's that same feeling of wanting to sink into the couch, turn on the TV and numb out. It's a familiar well-worn path. All my survival instincts say that denial is how to stay alive and function best in this world.

This was the truth many years ago when I was living with my abusers. I could not have sanely handled the emotional repercussions of having been abused time and time again. I had no way to process what was going on. I had nowhere to go for answers. We had no help. The best solution was to divide and store memories and feelings deep in our psyche until a time when we were safe and capable of knowing.

Today is that time. We are mature enough and old enough to handle the feelings I could not hold as a child. We are safe. We live with a loving supportive partner. We have friends who care about us and are a part of our day-to-day life. We have a dog who curls up at our feet and loves us no matter what. And most of all, we have an experienced dedicated therapist who has helped many others with DID heal and move on with their lives.

Despite all that, at times, I still find myself gravitating towards denial. I want to crawl into my protected bubble and be a princess shielded from life's horrors and challenges. I want to pretend I am a singleton and have the same issues as other people. The other day I was with a friend. She was talking about how she missed her parents and was wishing she lived closer to them. Empathetically I said, "I know what you mean." But a second later I caught myself. I turned around and said, "Actually, I don't know what you mean." Our truth is that we would never wish this. We don't know this feeling of wishing to be closer to parents. Safety for us meant moving far away from our abusers.

The denial sneaks up on me. It can be very subtle. For all my good intentions and dedicated hard work, it cycles through me time and time again. This pull to not see is powerful. I hate it. I also love it. It saved our life. And now it inhibits our life.

I love the vision of me and all the wondrous parts close together, sharing thoughts and feelings openly, holding hands in a circle of equals experiencing the present together and embracing the past with love. Rather than the vision of me

pushing parts away like a desperate beaver building a dam against a raging river of emotions and all my parts surging forward pushing against the dam, wounded and desperate to be heard.

Last night I lay in bed wanting to be "normal" and just go to sleep like other people do. But I felt my parts pushing in needing love and attention. I closed my eyes trying to sink into denial and ignore our truth. I didn't want to get out of bed and put on our slippers and go downstairs and write with my parts. I didn't want to know what they wanted to tell. I looked at my partner lying next to me and said, "Help. I know I need to go write but I don't want to."

He looked at me and smiled. He reminded me of the before and after picture he has seen time and time again. Before I communicate with my parts, I appear confused, lost, unavailable, and I say things that don't make sense. I look depressed and heavy. I carry a terrible burden. After, I come back skipping with lightness and the joy of having been heard. I smile. My thoughts are clear. I am emotionally present to him. I feel free and life seems easy again.

What is remarkable to me is that at the time I believe my before picture appears fine and "normal." I may feel the heaviness, but I believe my appearance does not reflect this. I am sure nothing shows. I think all the things I say make sense. And I believe that the face I am showing before is the better face. Denial seems like the best way to handle what is happening. I have to take a huge leap of faith each time I go against this belief and grab my notebook to write.

With DID, it feels as if these efforts are contrary to my survival. This was true in the past. They were. But now it is not true. Acceptance is the best way for us to live a full life. Acceptance of DID is not dangerous. We know this but don't always feel it. That's when I get tired and discouraged.

In truth, however, these moments are fewer as we recover more and more. And because we have come so far, our discouragement is greater when we do take those inevitable two steps back in our long path of one-steps forward. I forget about what life was like before our diagnosis. Our worst days now are a thousand times better than our best days then. It's easy to forget to focus on our progress, rather than what we have not worked through.

And the bottom line is that the after picture really is a better picture, whether I know it or not.

MV

*Partner's Page:***Learning About Dissociation**

By Mark Singer

"I'm taking all these bags of clothes and donating them to charity," is what I heard my wife say about clothes that just a couple of months ago she "just loved and would wear all the time."

"I'll meet you at the restaurant at 4:00 p.m.," my wife said; however, when 4 p.m. came around, my wife was nowhere to be found. Later that same night, my wife eventually showed up at home, and denied that we had even agreed to meet.

The above are just a couple of typical examples, and mild ones at that, of my unstated introduction to my wife's multiple personalities. Without knowing that she had this condition, at first, I thought that she was very, very confusing, to say the least. Fortunately, we discovered her condition—although by accident, no less.

Here is how it happened. One day, while having lunch with a friend, I mentioned that several years ago a counselor had told my wife that she was D.I.D. Ironically, this counselor never explained what this term meant. In fact, instead of returning for my wife's next appointment to fully explain this jargon, this well-intentioned counselor had resigned the position for another job.

So despite getting the exact name of her condition, initially, my wife had received no other clue. As such, even though she told me that there had been a diagnosis, and the name of this diagnosis, I, without any experience on the subject, and she, without researching D.I.D., had remained in the dark until this lunch conversation.

Fortunately, I had kept the term D.I.D. in the back of my mind until meeting my friend who understood what it meant. And of all the people that I could have encountered, not only did this particular friend understand it, but the person also had D.I.D.! As a result, I got a lunchtime crash course in D.I.D., and as you can imagine, as soon as I could talk with my wife, I

passed this life-changing information on to her.

Perhaps you may think that at this point, when my wife finally got the complete description of her condition, that this was the end of her lifelong struggle; however, looking back, it was merely a rest stop. From that fateful day of her complete discovery of her D.I.D. to the present, her struggle, and mine as well, has continued. The key difference is that now there is sustained hope—hope to be living a healthy and happy life everyday.

After many hours of discussion that followed our initial recognition of my wife's D.I.D., we eventually discovered—make that uncovered—that she contained 30 personalities. And since she is a portrait artist, she went right to work drawing each one of their faces. ...Can you imagine it, seeing, face-to-face, in vivid color, all of a person's alters! I can, because I did. I was delighted, amazed, dumbfounded and of course, shocked! But mostly I was relieved—and that made me happy; we finally had a definitive answer for so much perplexing behavior!

After that, a couple months later, we reached the stage of talking with each alter. We then made a videotape of my wife as nearly all of them (some were not willing or were unable to be involved). We did this in order to see what my wife looked like on the outside as she became each of her alters. To watch the playback of this video and see her face, body and even voice change in noticeable and often dramatic ways was as wonderful as it was mysterious...and it was plenty mysterious!

We then started to delve into the psychological makeup of each alter; we learned their attitudes, their likes, dislikes, worries, and even their different religions. In particular, we found that my wife's alters are composed of different personalities for each of these religious points of view: Atheistic, Jewish, Christian, Wiccan

(white magic) and Baptist. Think about it; if you were to bring actual members of all these diverse spiritualities together for, let us say, a discussion over coffee, wouldn't you expect some conflict?

And indeed, my wife felt this same kind of angst—only on the inside. To me, to summarize her experience up to that point in her life, it appeared that there had been, literally, a holy war going on inside of her! However, as I perceived it, what had appeared as drastic shifts in her ideology had finally been given a very reasonable psychological explanation—her D.I.D. As a result, I felt much more relaxed having learned what was the source of so many of her contradictory religious experiences.

Our next step was to get professional and expert counseling. So with our video and a notebook containing her drawings of her alters as well as their detailed descriptions, we went to the psychiatric center of a large midwestern university located in southern Michigan. To our dismay, and before we could even present our evidence, two psychiatrists, including the head of the clinic, told us that multiple personality disorder did not exist. In that same conversation, we also learned that funding for treatment of patients with D.I.D. had been discontinued at this same university.

However, the good news is that one of these two psychiatrists did know someone in the area where we were living who would treat my wife for her condition. So we contacted this recommended therapist. To make a long story short, this counselor did acknowledge my wife's condition, but held the philosophy that in order to be integrated, all the alters would have to disappear. At present, to my understanding, that would be like saying that in order for a headache to go away, you would have to make your brain vanish!

So we continued to look for a counselor who would expertly treat my

wife. Eventually we found two very kind and compassionate counselors who recognized her condition, but preferred to treat the issues (not the personalities) that she presented. As such, my wife received some more issues counseling.

Nevertheless, at this point in my wife's life, besides her struggle with past abuse issues, she was also suffering from bipolar disorder. This required immediate psychiatric intervention, and eventually, we were fortunate to find a doctor who carefully and skillfully monitored her medications.

However, this was only after two failed attempts with psychiatrists who either undermedicated or overmedicated her. Let me tell you, seeing my wife either raging out of control with too little medication—or acting like a drugged-out, stoned zombie on too much medication, was excruciating to watch and highly frustrating to deal with.

Throughout the time of these counselors and psychiatrists, my wife and I continued our personal learning and growth regarding her alters. In fact, the majority of her progress in

dealing with her personalities has been as a result of her own self-talk as well as their increased interaction with me. I can still remember the night that we discovered her core personality: to me, looking back, it felt like someone had placed the sun inside our living room!

As of this writing, which is about a year after finally getting effective treatment and a more complete understanding of D.I.D, from my point of view, my wife is now leading a healthy life. She feels relaxed and energetic everyday, with no depression, and she is starting her own art business. In order to help her get started, we also purchased a house in which there is a large space entirely reserved for whatever her artistic endeavors may be.

And to complete the picture, we have added two cats to our life: Heshie and Sheshe (both of their names sound like the word "cheese"). Meanwhile, I have remained steadily employed in the teaching field. And to our credit, together, my wife and I and another mutual friend have also written and nationally published a book of art, poetry and prose about the many spiritual issues that we have

encountered in our lives—*Soul in Mortal Chrysalis* (available through Amazon.com) In fact, the picture on the back of this issue is one of my wife's drawings from our book that she created in response to one of my poems—cited below. I wrote this to my wife while we were going through the struggles mentioned here.

In closing, hopefully, you will enjoy reading my heartfelt poem, and feel the hope and love my wife and I share. Thanks for your interest in my, and our, story.

The God in You is the True Love in Me

You always love me no matter how much I need.
 You always give me joy in just the right degree.
 You always want the best for me, and your best is what I receive.
 You always forgive me for hurting you as winter is forgiven by the spring.
 You are not my reflection in the mirror, not an illusion, not an imagining.
 You are my true love, my spirit, with a connection yet unseen,
 The God in you is the true love in me.

MV

The following are excerpts from a note which accompanied the enclosed art and writing:

I would like to submit this drawing and poem to your courageous magazine. I have been helped by many of your contributors.

The child is a self-portrait. "She" and I are dealing with things of the past which are painful. I thought for years that I should just "get over it" and now find that the consequences are my own to deal with. To know that there are others who understand has been tremendous for my spirit and healing.

By Barb R.



Frozen in Time

Eyes old on the day of birth
 Seeing life,
 Feeling hurt.
 Eyes narrowed in pain,
 suspicion,
 mistrust,
 The ebullient
 kneading of life in a
 shallows thrust.
 Eyes not able to
 intake sustenance
 Without touch
 Eyes on a face
 growing older
 Without much.
 Eyes absent a view
 Of graciousness refined,
 A perpetual old soul frozen in time.

MV

Praise

In praise of this poet
 Who brings images home,
 Images with substance
 Like honey-wheat bread
 Images that spread
 Through my heart
 Like wild winds
 Bring dust sparkles.
 This Poet who draws life
 Like the deepest breath
 The first breath
 The last breath
 The breath of excitement
 With feelings that wrap
 Around my eyes
 Like the warmth
 Of a nurturing Woman
 Who touches every color
 Of my struggles.
 She was there when I wandered.
 She paints the blisters,
 The callouses,
 The rough places of my skin.
 Beware the strength
 Of Song

By E.L.

MV

Thanking Writers of *Many Voices* for Their Help

By Ellen P.

(Ed. note. we rarely print specific thank-yous from readers to our contributors. Usually we just send them on to the original writer--if we have that person's address. I'm making an exception because it may be helpful to see how one reader of MV has been able to apply lessons from several different writers in a very short time. Ellen is really working hard in her therapy--and she is an example of how all of you who share thoughts and art with MV can improve the lives of others. Bless all of you! I'm honored to print your material. Lynn W.)

RE: Issue dated 12/2001. Article titled "Internal Community Meeting" by CE.

I have read your contribution and have adapted the "internal community meeting" to meet my own needs, as I (a person with DID) am not co-conscious with any alter in my system yet. I dialogue with them in my journal. I realized after reading your article that I needed to do this because I needed more cooperation with many alters. I took all your suggestions. Since I am not co-conscious, I chose a responsible alter to report to me via my journal what went on in the meeting so I would not be "left out." Before my first meeting, I had this alter communicate with all alters for their own concerns, which would be addressed at the meeting and then communicated to me via my journal. I expressed via the same pathway my opinions and "vote" to this alter. I have had only one meeting, but it worked (and like you, I had a severe headache afterwards.) Rest assured that I will continue to do this as issues come up within my system. Thanks for your help.

RE: Issue dated 02/1995: Article titled "Master of Resistance" by Diana Z.

I recognized myself in your contribution. Your article helped me start communicating to my psychiatrist something which I have "stuffed" (my m.o.--modus operandi) since 1995. I have been in treatment with my shrink for two years.

RE: Same issue; Article titled "When You're Sick of Therapy" by Babbs

I now pamper myself before and after sessions and now treat myself too, for a job well done. I have also taken to heart all you wrote, since I need to for my recovery.

RE: same article, contribution by Tonya: I read your contribution and have taken it to heart. My shrink told me what you wrote in your first paragraph, so I know I have "trust issues." But I didn't trust my alters. Now I realize I do not, and am now taking steps within my system to remedy this. Thank you also.

RE: Same issue, same article, contribution by Karen & Co.

After reading your contribution, I realize I run from issues I need to discuss in treatment. I "dance" around issues in therapy for self-protection because I find it hard to trust anyone. I am afraid of being hurt or receiving criticism from my therapist. So two weeks ago, I made a firm resolve to start not "stuffing" what I've been holding back. It was scary, but I did it anyway. I found out that I was not hurt by my therapist for talking, so it was easier the second week. Still scary, but easier. Thanks for your help. This week will be my third session of not "stuffing." After the second week, I was rewarded by my therapist for not "stuffing."

RE: Same issue, "Therapists' Page" by E. Sue Blume

I have a friend who continues to phone me, obsessing about her problems and issues and using me for her therapist. After calls from this friend I am "beat" and unable to care for myself. Last night I advised this friend to go to therapy and told her why, after reading Ms Blume's contribution of "Caring for a friend in pain." I realized that I was putting myself and my recovery on the "back burner" by continually listening to this friend's issues and putting her before me. I have Caller ID on my phone. It got to the point that whenever this friend called I would not answer the phone, but let her talk to my voice mail, and then erased her litany of

complaints. I do not have rescue fantasies; friends call me because I give good advice, but others respect me. I realized this friend did not. She's now very angry, but under no circumstances can I let her drag me down. Thanks for your help, also.

RE: same issue, Article titled "When Therapy Goes Wrong" by Four Dragons.

I had a like experience with a female psychiatrist, who did the same. The list goes on like yours. She also threatened to kill anyone close to me, including my dog. And she abused child and other alters. I'm an SRA cult survivor and when the power went out she had white candles in the waiting room and red candles in the appointment room. I repressed what happened in the session, but knew it was medically inappropriate. It took me five years before I got out of therapy with her. I saw two bad therapists after her, and finally got out of therapy with them. (One took four years, one took two years.) The female psychiatrist I speak of here was emotionally, physically, and sexually abusive. The others were just bad treatment. I'm now in treatment with an excellent psychiatrist (two years, now) and am just now starting to talk about that bad female psychiatrist. Your article got me to start talking about that past abusive relationship with my present doctor, after "stuffing" it since the relationship ended in 1995. It is now 2002. Thanks for your help. If not for your contribution, I would still be "stuffing" it. Thanks to your article, if I was still in that treatment relationship, I would have ended it. The same goes for the bad therapy.

Please, *Many Voices*, if you don't publish this, forward my feedback to these precious angels. I want them to know how they have helped me. Thanks!

Growing in Self-Love

By Marguerite and the Wee Ones

Much that we do in life is automatic...the different steps that are involved in driving a car, etc. Unfortunately, there are other facets of our lives that should not be automatic, but that should be challenged! Self-awareness can be the first step in releasing ourselves from the painful, debilitating messages ("tapes") that were forced upon us when we were too young to defend ourselves.

Ask yourself...

Are you going to let someone else's opinion of who you are...or of what you do...ruin your day...ruin your life?

The recent realization that I still actually believe my mother's scathing criticism of me...that I automatically accept her negative "hate mail" messages and let them retain their power to influence and guide my life has been an incredible and empowering discovery!

I realized that my mother's comment, "I love you, but I don't like you!" has had a powerful effect on me as I have struggled with life-long feelings of low self-esteem (not liking yourself). Not only was I pronounced unlovable...I was unlikable, and fated to live my life with a well-entrenched "inferiority complex." That was my reality and I would tell that "truth" to anyone who seemed interested in being my friend, so they would know the truth about me before they decided to accept the "burden" who was me.

On December 15, 1985, God gave to me my "Spiritual Birthday." I experienced God's amazing love. It was as though "all of heaven came down and gave me a hug." I felt that my heart was filled to overflowing with a love that I had never before known!

Beautiful loving words flowed into my heart, and I wrote them down.

God plans for us to be love-able.

Love your neighbor as yourself...

For only when you accept Love for yourself...

Can you share God's love with others.

It was as though God was encouraging me, "Take my love, my

precious child, and use it to grow in self-love...love yourself!" What a tremendous challenge for someone who had been a child for whom love did not exist. Even though through the years other people have given to me the affirmations that I really need for growing in self-love, I have great difficulty in taking them in, holding on to them and nurturing myself with their good messages. My negative, old "toxic tapes" get into my mind faster, forming a blockade against any new encouraging beliefs.

It helps me to write on post-it notes that I put on my mirror, my own encouraging messages, such as...

When you see a compliment coming and you know it's aimed at you...Just stand there...look it straight in the eye and say "thank you!"

Another note says:

"Oh Lord, help me to refuse to live my life as a "negaholic" and to give to myself each day permission to laugh!"

Some cars are equipped with warning devices that cause their horns to sound automatically when they are in danger of being stolen. Practice using your own "horn" to warn yourself when your own happiness is in danger of being stolen by your own old "toxic tapes."

Marketing experts know how valuable and powerful a slogan repeated over and over can be. I created this slogan:

"Turn Off Old Toxic Tapes (TOOTT)" to help me when my old "Toxic Tapes" connected automatically to things that my children said to me and caused me more pain than the situation warranted.

Make T-O-O-T-T your slogan, keep T-O-O-T-Ting your horn! And know that God Loves you!

MV

(Marguerite has prepared the 4-color TOOTT refrigerator magnet, shown in the adjacent column. It is available for sale for just \$1 and an SASE, to Marguerite & Wee Ones, 819 Tred Avon Rd., Baltimore, MD 21212.)

Explaining My Ongoing Need for Recovery from Child Abuse To those who do not understand.

By Sally B.

Many friends and some relatives have told me to "get a life," "forget the past," "stop feeling sorry for myself" and so on. (Sound familiar?)

In time I came to realize that they don't have a clue. While some of them have experienced abuse themselves, they do not seem disabled by it or feel bad enough to go to therapy.

So I tell them this story:

One day two boys were climbing a tall tree. The branch they were sitting on broke, and they fell.

One of the boys was crying and had a scraped knee. His mother held and comforted him, and put an antibiotic and a bandaid on his knee.

The second boy broke several bones in his legs, ankles, and feet. He also tore several ligaments and tendons in his legs. A neighbor called an ambulance and he was in the hospital for three months. He had twenty-two operations and years of physical therapy.

Boy One was up in the tree again the next afternoon, and promptly forgot his fall.

He continued all his activities and he is a man now who jogs, plays touch football, even goes rock-climbing with no trouble at all.

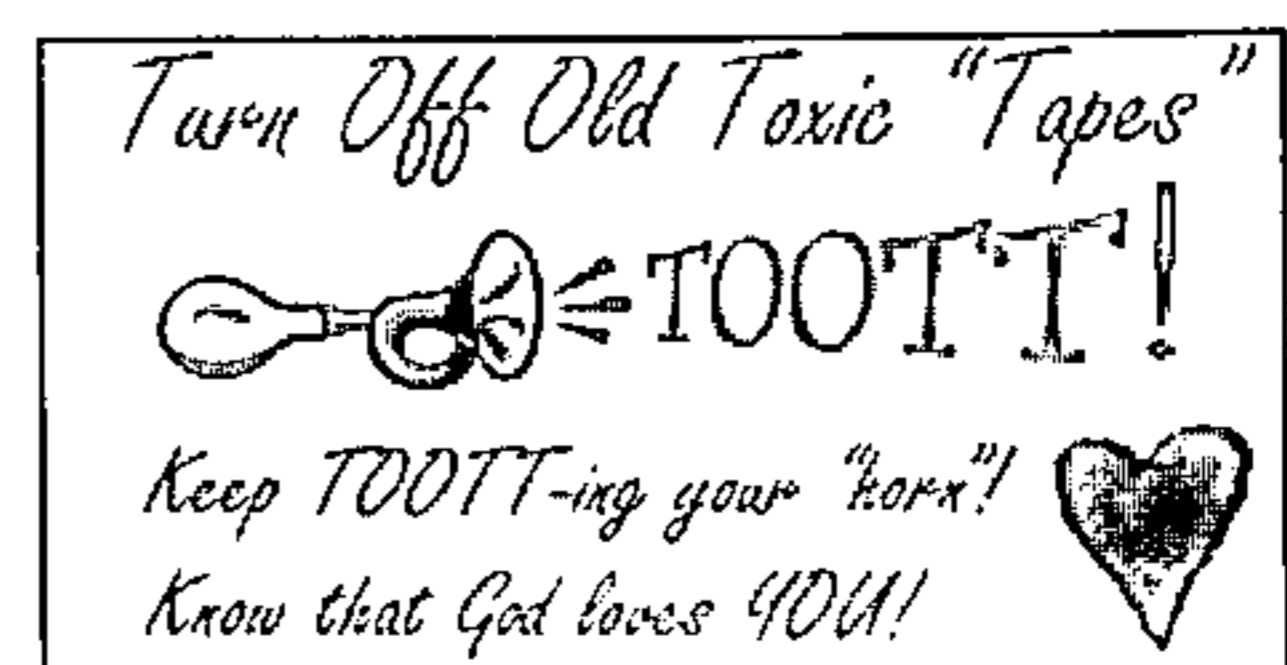
Boy Two walked with crutches for many years. The only sport he could take part in was swimming.

He is a man now, too. He walks only with the aid of leg braces and two canes. He is severely limited by his disability when it comes to earning a living, recreational activities, and just about all parts of life.

Two boys fell from a tree. One was badly hurt and he will live life as a disabled person because of it. The other boy was a bit frightened and got a scratched knee, but was fine after a bandaid and a hug.

Most of us have been abused. Some of us were devastated by it and are disabled even as adults because of it. Others of us can hardly recall what happened, and are doing just fine. That's not a decision, that's a fact.

MV



A Man's Story

By Anon (client of MP)

Editor's note. this is a very long piece, with unsettling details. I am including it without much editing because it shows hope at the end. .and because I really want to encourage men in therapy to share their stories with us. We can't usually run long pieces like this. .and I prefer to focus on the positive. I won't print a lot of graphic abuse descriptions, no matter how "truthful" they are. But this piece comes in under the wire. I think I will be interested in what you readers have to say about it. - LW)

My father was the first born of three children in the northeast. He later on met my mother, who was the last of five children, a very artistic lady, talented and intelligent. She lost her mother shortly after she was born. Her father raised the children and did not remarry till later in life.

My father was raised by very perfectionistic parents, very stringent and controlling. Love and affection was implied, not openly expressed or verbalized. His mother was the nurturing parent, under a cloak of strictness, however. He had a third-grade education.

Mother was raised in a more permissive and loving atmosphere. She was very feminine and open, though somewhat shy and reserved. The family was raised with a strong musical background. Schooling was very important for a well-proportioned start in life. Due to Mother's family's musical talents, Dad learned to play bass fiddle and later also sang in a barber shop choir.

From the earliest age I can remember my father was reactive and had little patience, but he did laugh and play some. At times he even sang with mother when she played the piano.

When I was in the first grade, I can remember just a week or so before Christmas., my little brother was lying on the couch, sick. Mother was playing the piano. Dad and she were singing Christmas carols. My other brother, just younger than myself, and my sister, were listening. I was in the kitchen. I do not recall what I was doing at the time. I do remember looking at my sick brother and noticed he had one eye open and it scared me. It seemed so glassy and unseeing. I finally was able to get Mother and Dad to listen to me long enough for me to tell them there was something wrong with Terry. Dad picked him up and took him into the kitchen and tried to

get Terry to stand on the counter. He couldn't. His legs wouldn't hold him. He wouldn't try to stand at all.

Mother called the doctor who had in the past several days been treating him for a cold. Mother was told they should get him to the hospital as quickly as they could. The doctor would meet them there.

The neighbor came over to sit us and put us to bed. I eventually went to sleep but I was terrified and afraid something awful was going to happen. I slept fitfully. In the morning Mother told my brother David and I our little brother Terry had died of spinal meningitis in the early morning hours, and he'd gone on to Heaven.

Before this happened, we went to church as a family on a fairly regular basis. After Terry died, however, we went less often and Dad never went after this. Dad was very distant and didn't talk much to us children. For a long time, many years, I did not realize I had taken responsibility for my little brother's death. I knew that was the reason Dad no longer loved me. I had to have been really bad to have let that happen. I should have watched my little brother much closer and warned Mother and Dad sooner and in time to save his life.

Later on, Mother told us children our father held it against God, that He had not spared Terry's life. That was the reason he would no longer go to church with us as a family. That was why he got angry...because he was hurt. I had really messed things up good.

Within a year or two, we moved to the country, about three miles north of town. I was in my second year of the third grade, and having a hard time. My grades were poor in everything but art. I was shy, and to get up in front of my class was terribly degrading and embarrassing. Once I was there I couldn't talk or answer questions. My

mind would be racing a mile a minute.

After we had moved out of town, my brother David and I were required to do many jobs around the house. We lived on an acre of ground and the weeds were taller than we were. We carried water from the spring, dug the spring out after hard rains, because the hill between the house and the spring would erode down the steps into the spring. This went on until Dad had a well dug. Even though we had to do it less often, we still had to keep the spring dug out. We dug garden several years until our dad bought a garden tractor. We still had to keep it weeded and tilled.

Dad was not one to mess with words when we didn't satisfy him with those things he wanted us to do. If it wasn't done to his satisfaction we would get anything from knuckle raps to cutting our own willow switches from the creek bank below the house. Our father said about correction measures, "spare the rod and spoil the child"...I don't believe any of us have turned out spoiled. I can recall wearing welts on my back and legs many times to school, and our clothes sticking to them.

At times our father would hit and slap our mother, for which we grew to hate him. Our mother was a very hard-working mother and totally dedicated to raising her family in the best way she could. She would get up at five o'clock in the morning, read the Bible for fifteen minutes, wake us for school, then get breakfast, pack our lunches and then we'd be on our way to the bus. The ones still not school-age came next, then she would clean the kitchen, then iron and sew, and if needed, do the wash.

Then she would start lunch, awaken Dad, have his clothes ready, get lunch on the table. Then they'd eat. Dad would get ready for work. (For many years he worked second shift—3:00 to 11:00 pm.) When we boys returned

home from school we would most usually have a list of things to do and no matter how hard these things were, we were expected to have them done when he came home. Our father always had a paddle (wooden with holes in it), and a leather strap (the type used to sharpen straight razors) hung in the living room. My brother and I were terrified to have these used on us. Before our father would use these he would shout and scream in rage and anger, hitting, clouting, slapping, knocking us on our heads with his fists and knuckles.

Our mother would sometimes try to step in to stop or try to talk to him. For which she'd oft-times get the same thing, for her trying to help us. I often would wish I could hit him with anything big and heavy to keep him from abusing our mother. Our sisters didn't get abused as often as we boys, but they hated him for hitting our mother, also.

When I turned eighteen and was then old enough to enlist in the service I quit high school in my junior year and enlisted in the Air Force. Somehow I made it through basic training, then I also excelled in aircraft mechanic training. I became a crew chief on an F-86 Sabre Jet, stationed in France. I was later reassigned to a base in German, and in the winter of '58-'59 was again reassigned to Lockbourne AFB (now known as Rickenbacker AFB) in Columbus, Ohio for the remainder of my enlistment. I was honorably discharged on the 31st of August, 1959. When I visited a friend I served with in the air force, we decided to go into business together. I went back home, confronted my father about the \$50 a month I had sent for him to bank for me when I discharged. He explained there was no account. That I owed him that money for the cost of raising me, giving me a good home. Three years and ten months of savings I thought I had for a good start. A car, a home, a business, \$2,300 I'd thought was waiting...now a ghost in my memory.

I was angry, outraged at being taken advantage of, and used, robbed by my own father. What little trust I had left in him was now shattered. I hated him, not for what he had now done, but also to realize although I'd not been

home where he could physically abuse me, even so, he was abusing and using me for four years. I didn't ever want to look him in the face again.

I signed on with a pipe line company, at this time contracted to run pipe from the southern state boundary of Pennsylvania to the northern boundary. At the end of that contract I drove an antique Ford panel truck to Oklahoma for my boss. From there I hitched a ride to Surprise, Arizona, where my grandfather had some apartments I would do some maintenance on. He had had several strokes, the last of which had caused much damage to his right arm and leg. He had to use a cane to get about and could no longer drive. My step-grandmother was a very nice lady and helped him in everything, with not a lot of thanks. I'm sure the strokes affected his mind to some degree. I didn't know him well enough to know how much. It had been many years since he had visited us in the East.

Mother had been to see her father, out west, one time in all those years. Those two or three weeks proved to be the most memorable weeks of our mother's life. She was never able to return before she died at age 52 from complications brought on from surgery.

I was living out west at the time my mother became dangerously ill. She began to hemorrhage, and they took her to the hospital where they eventually did surgery. My family, good brothers and sisters that they were, never informed me of her condition until after her death. Again, I was terribly hurt, angry, left out, treated with gross disrespect, distrust.

As soon as I'd heard of her death, I began plans for flying back for mother's funeral. Within hours I was on a plane still fuming about their not getting some word to me about her illness. I wanted to scream. It wasn't until years later when I realized our upbringing had calloused all our minds. Our emotional make-up had been disfigured, distorted. Sympathy, empathy, touch with reality had suffered from loss of trust, faith, love, caring in all their truest sense. We had all lost touch with feeling.

Along about the time we lost our

mother, I was dating and planning to marry my sweetheart, Patricia. Her stepfather was a Holiness preacher, very strict in his ways. Justified, of course, by the Scriptures. Over a period of two and a half years as a dating couple, we never dated alone but for twice, when our destination was known, the people were known, and we were timed from leaving to arrival, both ways, going and coming.; We married in June. I was eight years older than my bride. Our marriage got off to a poor start. We lost our first child, John. He lived barely over an hour. Our second child, a strong healthy lively black-haired angel. Our third we also lost, and I nearly lost my wife as well. She contracted a kidney infection from the doctor's negligence. The fetus was left to medically self-abort, which it didn't do for nearly six months. The first boy they brought and laid it across my wife's chest after it had died. She nearly went crazy. The second time she nearly died.

We had two more girls, and our accident, our last, a son, who didn't want to see daylight, took three trips to the hospital.

My own behaviors at this time were unknown as to their scope, shape, form, their workings and how deeply-rooted they were. I was at this point totally unaware of what my next dozen or so years would hold. I would find all the things I had had done to me, I would wind up doing worse to my children, my first and second wives, our families, many friends and acquaintances.

My wife divorced me in my first year of prison. I was sentenced to sixteen years for my abusiveness to my children, and my wife was terribly fearful of my anger and rage, or where it might lead. Even so, she visited me with our children every several months during my sentence.

My sentence included a two-for-one clause, and I was due for release in seven years, six-and-a-half months. I was released to a friend and his wife. I remained with them for nearly six months, working from their home till I found work with a sign company. Later I went to work with a company who cut aircraft and aerospace gaskets, also making steel rule dies—a good paying job.

Later, when working for a sign company, I met the lady who later became my second wife...a legal secretary who I found very attractive, intelligent, into crafts and enjoyed the out of doors. I felt I couldn't be any more lucky. I eventually moved in with her. We, still later, bought a new house and lived there till after we were married. Then we moved back east.

There were still the times I would have my bouts with anger and rage, but I tried very hard to work through these. Yet, without much success. At some point, my wife called me on my abusive behavior and I didn't believe her. Everyone got angry at times, and that if she would be more willing to understand, more tolerant and take me as I am, we wouldn't have any problem. That I didn't have a problem, it was those who wanted to change me into some sort of a puppet to do their bidding and take control over me who had the problem. And I truly and sincerely believed this to be true.

One day, while reading an article in a Reader's Digest, I was confronted by and challenged to the possibility of having a bi-polar condition. We discussed this at length, my wife and I, and she admitted there were some very strong parallels in my actions and behaviors that agreed with the article. So the same week I found myself in a mental health unit, embarrassed and wanting to justify my actions in anyway that I could to prove myself as not mentally ill.

After meeting with the counselor not only was I diagnosed as having bi-polar disorder, but I also had adult attention-deficit disorder as well. Medication prescribed immediately was lithium, with multiple side effects possible. That I now had a mental disorder dashed my ego to pieces. I had to recall times when I'd made fun or joked of those who had physical and mental disorders. Now they were returning to haunt me.

When I was in prison that first seven-and-a-half years, there was some counseling available and I'd volunteered to participate. Part curiosity and part to see what I could get, point-wise, for being a good person in the system. In time I feel I did get some helpful information, but

not for abusive behavior.

I learned how to deal with anger, at least to keep it under control in prison, as well as patience and making it work in a very stressful surrounding. communication and understanding attitudes. Avoiding inflammatory confrontations. These were all beneficial after I was out and on my own again, but my deviant behavior only went underground and in remission. Nothing was as great as I wanted to believe. My gains were not as solid as they seemed. I didn't realize how frail an existence I was believing in and was so sure of its ability to keep me in a continuous mode of recovery. I knew I was now in control! So much for beliefs!

For nearly 23 years I deluded myself into believing I was fine, that my magazines and my books on porn and X-rated movies were all quite normal and socially acceptable. Even though I kept my stash out of sight from my wife, it was still ok, even if her Puritan ways did not accept my preferences.

Keeping up with taking my medication (the lithium) had come down to..."if I needed it." sort of regimen. I'd been taking it for several years and felt assured I could now function quite well without it. Another one of my lies to myself, which I totally believed.

After starting the lithium, I also took counseling for a couple years before we moved out of the area. From there I was in and out of counseling several times for the sake of my wife. My temper, anger and rage, my procrastination, manipulation and chronic lying. Here, again, I fully believed my wife caused all these things to flare up due to her badgering, forceful, unrelenting, stubborn ways. I had a right to my free time to do with as I pleased. I worked hard to keep the bills paid and the creditors away from the doors.

After all this, at a point in time when my marriage was going sour, work was a drag, economy in a slump, I was depressed, sopping in anxiety and my sex life was on hold, self-esteem in a rut and just plain didn't give a damn—I reoffended.

In jail again! But one thing was different. This time I realized I had big

problems and if I didn't accept them for what they were I was going to spend the rest of my life in prison. This was not the way I wanted the rest of my life to end. I had to let the secrets out, open up to someone seriously for my own recovery, and do my best to change, first of all for myself, then for all those I'd hurt and had caused so much hurt, pain and suffering.

I went back to counseling and became involved with an SLAA group until my case came to trial. (Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous). For the first time in my life I was being truthful with myself and truthful with others...and no secrets.

My case came to trial five months later during which time I continued working at my job. I was sentenced to one year in prison for GSI (gross sexual imposition) and I knew I'd gotten a break. I could have drawn five years. I promised myself I would involve myself in as many programs I had access to during my year of incarceration, and this I did, as well as reading all I could find on subjects related to any facet of my unacceptable behaviors.

My wife of twelve years at this time became my mirror to change. During her visits and through the medium of my letters she was to be of great assistance to me to read and point out growth aspects I could not see myself. No one knows me better than she. I can't fool her, and she knows I know that.

It's been three-and-a-half years since I completed my sentence. I am less than a year and a half from completing my five-year control release program. I take my medication as required. I am in an offenders program first weekly, bi-weekly, and now once a month. I also am still involved with SLAA. These programs have been of tremendous importance to me. The information gathered during their involvement have been invaluable.

I've learned that programs are only as good as the individuals who are involved in them...their truthfulness, willingness to learn and freedom of input. Anyone who is sincere about personal growth and recovery from any behavioral problems will gain from any program according to what they are willing to put into it.

Letters

We have been in therapy with the same therapist, but different psychiatrists, for over twelve years, and we have never before had a problem like the one we are having now. It seems that our "central" or "identified" personality, Stephanie, has gone far inside and we have been unable to reach her or bring her back out. She (we) works as an RN in a psychiatric unit—which is sometimes a very rewarding job, but mostly is stressful and discouraging. Just before she "left" she was becoming more self-destructive and suicidal, so in a way it was a relief when she left. But that was over six months ago and the rest of us have had to take up the slack, go to work and deal with all the problems there (the hospital has been sold twice in the past year).

Most of us who are left are under 16 years old, so it's been getting really scary and hard to act so grown-up all the time. We have to be careful about the way we talk and walk, and many times when we don't understand words that people say, we have to listen really hard inside until somebody show us what the word means.

Anyway, we were wondering if anyone else has ever had something like this happen, and if so, has that part ever come back to be with the rest again?

There are so many things that Stephanie doesn't know about—we were in the hospital for three weeks because another part, Brick, tried to kill off the rest of us. And our medicine has been changed, and we have a new car.

See—there are a lot of things that Stephanie doesn't know about, but we can tell her when she gets back. But does anybody know how to get her back? Please give us some ideas.

Thanks.

Jenny and Rebecca, et al



Thank you all for your help and support. Answers to my letter were wonderful and unexpected. (I wrote as Pat on MV's website in the March Sharing section.) As I was journaling (writing daily) I found I had written this. I named it after the fact.:

Life...Therapy

all of me
pieces without completion
scattered through the years
some lost...all broken...
some found...some not...
twisted broken....hiding...
Some testing to see if it's safe.
Slowly, so slowly,
Some are coming back.

. It helps to know that there are others like me and they care.

Margaret



I have an unusual problem and would like some suggestions. I'm a male who dissociates, and I'm diabetic. My response to medications and blood sugar readings seem to change radically, depending on which alter is present. My medical doctors don't believe me. They think I'm making this up. Does anyone know of research data that proves variability of physiological or chemical response related to alters' presence, especially with prescription medications? Any leads or authoritative sources would be deeply appreciated. Thanks

-Dave

MV

Books

Recollections of Sexual Abuse: Treatment principles and guidelines

By Christine A Courtois, PhD ©1999, 2002
Published by W.W. Norton. Hardback 435
pgs. \$45. Paperback 448 pgs, \$23.95

Dr. Courtois is the clinical director of the Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders at the Psychiatric Institute of Washington, D.C.

Her book is best described as a three-way tie among a scientific treatise, a quasi-legal document (Dr. Courtois is not a lawyer, but she directly takes on therapists' fears of being sued,) and a guidance manual for therapists to use in treating people who either definitely were or who may have been sexually abused in childhood. In reviewing the literature, Dr. Courtois presents the latest understanding of the scientific validity of post-traumatic therapy. Her extensive discussion of legal issues is intended to calm therapists down and

convince them that they can treat us without getting sued. Finally, her proposed guidelines for treating survivors are laid out to show therapists how to deal with abuse recovery in a responsible way.

Her treatment model encompasses three main phases: 1) the initial or early phase of stabilization, safety, alliance-building, support and self functions; 2) the middle phase of deconditioning, mourning and resolution of past trauma and associated losses (past and present); and 3) the late phase of reconsolidation consisting of self and relational development and life enhancement.(p.188).

Dr. Courtois takes the position that it is worthwhile for us patients to tell therapists about our lives; in fact, she believes that therapists are morally obligated to ask. There are a lot of therapists who disagree and will not

bring up abuse unless you mention it, and even then they don't want to discuss it.

Because most of us were abused decades ago, we have no way of producing proof (corroboration, police records, medical records, etc.) Her case studies are presented to show how therapists should deal with abuse in a variety of contexts, not just in the case of corroborated memories. Some of these situations are counter-intuitive, as when she discusses corroborated abuse which the patient doesn't remember.

I think we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Dr. Courtois for not only continuing to help people recover, but also directly addressing the tough issues in print. I recommend this book for therapists and survivors, without reservation.

By Mary Katherine

MV

THANK YOU for Your Wonderful Writing and Artwork! We Need Your Ideas for Next Year--NOW! Please tell us what matters to you, and what you would like to know.

Help MV help others! We are interested in all kinds of writing and art. And remember how beautiful you are when you share!--Sincerely, LynnW.

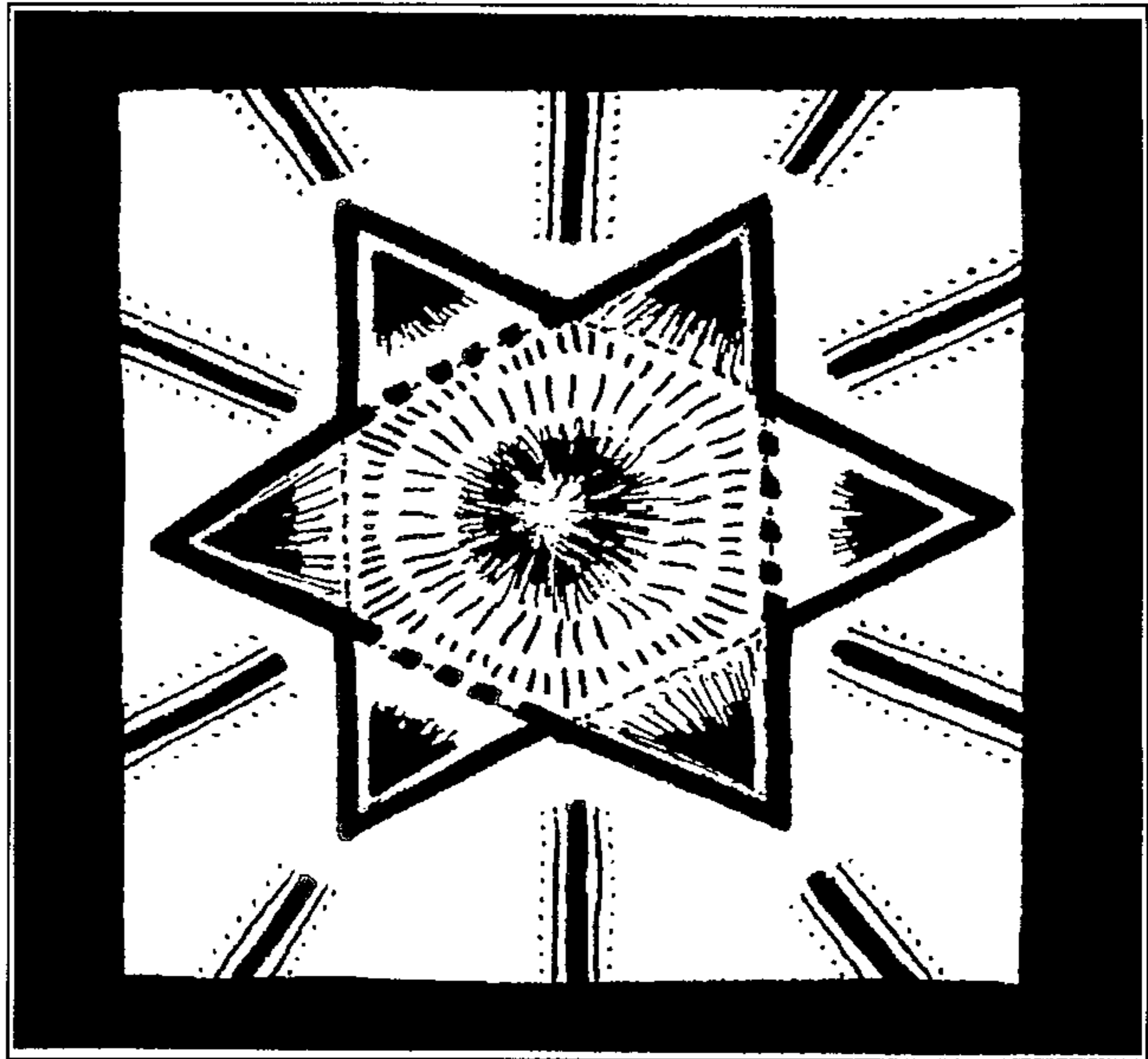
COMING SOON!

August 2002

Moments of Change. Affirmations that work for you. Art: Recovery turning points. (deadline extended)
Deadline: June 10, 2002.

October 2002

Coping with special trauma problems: fugue states, depersonalization, amnesia attacks, PTSD flashbacks.
Art: Getting back to reality.
Deadline: August 1, 2002.



Share with us!

Prose, poetry, and art are accepted on upcoming issue themes, (and even on NON-themes, if it's really great.) DO send humor, cartoons, good ideas, and whatever is useful to you. Please limit prose to about 4 typed double-spaced pages. Line drawings (black on white) are best. We can't possibly print everything. Some pieces will be condensed, but we'll print as much as we can. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of your originals and a note giving us permission to publish and/or edit or excerpt your work.

Subscriptions for a year (six issues) of *MANY VOICES*: \$36 in the U.S., \$42US in Canada, \$48US elsewhere. Back issues always available, each issue 1/6 yearly price. Enclose the form below (or a copy) with your check, and mail to *MANY VOICES*, P.O. Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639. Phone: (513) 751-8020.

MANY VOICES

NEW!
We now accept Visa & Mastercard!



Name _____
Address _____
City/State/ZIP _____

I have a Dissociative Disorder Professional/therapist Relative/Friend

Subscription type: New Renewal Gift Send full list of past themes: _____

Full yr. (6 iss.) '89 ___ '90 ___ '91 ___ '92 ___ '93 ___ '94 ___ '95 ___ '96 ___ '97 ___ '98 ___ '99 ___ '00 ___ '01 ___ '02 ___

Specific issues or preferred start date: _____

1 year: \$36 in U.S.; \$42US in Canada; Elsewhere, \$48 in U.S. currency drawn on a U.S. bank.

Make check payable to *MANY VOICES* & send with this form to
MANY VOICES, PO Box 2639, Cincinnati, OH 45201-2639

CHARGE IT! (Please print clearly) (circle one) VISA MASTERCARD

Cardholder's Name: _____

Acct# _____ Exp.Date _____ Total:\$ _____

Signature: _____ Today's Date: _____