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Prismatic vision: A phenomenological exploration of creativity

Hotz, Helen Nita, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992

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PRISMATIC VISION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
EXPLORATION OF CREATIVITY

by

Helen Nita Hotz

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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1992

Approved by


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@ 1992 by Helen Nita Hotz

APPROVAL PAGE

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I give thanks to all those who have reached out and touched
the children and me
mind to mind, heart to heart, soul to soul
so that our stories could be told.

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Emily, Anne,
Liza & Megan

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This qualitative study chronicles the personal journeys of five females and their struggle to give expression to the creative patterns at different points of their lives. Through the phenomenological process, the methods of narrative inquiry, and informal interviewing, the author investigates the creative lives of four students and her own life.

First the author brings to language the connections between what she identifies as the inner monologue and outer dialogue, and the relationship of both to creativity. Then, as she examines the individuals' understanding of their creative expression, she seeks patterns in their varied life-pictures using what she calls prismatic vision to tell their stories. In this process she is viewing the varied stories of individuals from early life through adulthood.

Second, through informal interviews and dialoguing with the individuals she attempts to see the entire picture and to determine the connections between and among them; each picture must be viewed separately and at the same time one must be aware of all the stories, much like viewing a prism.

The study concludes that in recognizing the connection between the inner monologue and the outer dialogue and allowing it to reach a conscious state, we give access to learning for all individuals. The growth of understanding that evolves when an individual is allowed to process his or her own inner monologue and outer dialogue not only leads to the unfolding of a creative expression, but opens the door to understanding how the thinking process unfolds for each individual. These stories are intended for individuals interested in further languaging the creative experience of thinking.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Prismatic Vision: A Phenomenological Exploration of Creativity tells the story of the personal journey of five creative females and their struggle to find expression. I have chosen to examine the stories of four females of differing ages. I am the fifth individual and will add my own perceptions about myself as I was at each of their ages. Since a major goal of this study is better understanding my own creative process as an educator, I have selected only females to interview. I recognize that there may be gender related issues involved in understanding an individual's way of being creative and do not want to sort out those issues here.

In *Composing a Life*, Bateson (1989) says that we illuminate our own lives when we look into the lives of others. It is my purpose to bring a better understanding to the creative process in education as that pattern finds expression in the lives of these students and in my own life. I will tell the story of the four girls and in telling their stories I will begin to understand my own creative process.

The Background - Coming from the Silence

While working with elementary students over the years, I have been interested in those who did not fit easily into the existing school environment. These students were different for a variety of reasons, but the common thread of the students was that their needs were not recognized by any school program.

I have become increasingly interested in those students who, with creative intensity, stretched the existing boundaries of the educational programs provided for them. My interest in these students has been unfolding consciously only for the last thirteen years as I worked with academically gifted students. These students were

identified as being academically gifted after an evaluation of attitude, achievement and classroom grades. From the pool of students who qualified for gifted classes, another group of students began surfacing within the designated group. The similarities I found in this second group were identified by Vera John-Steiner (1985) as:

- a striving for a personal voice, a language.
- a passion or intensity for their task.
- a search for meaning in their lives.
- a preoccupation with the mind.
- a need to lose themselves in the exploration of their tasks.

They were and are students who actively define their own way of being creative. I have watched as they struggled with different ways of patterning their constantly changing environments. The closer I observed, the more I felt that the problems with which they were struggling were the same problems with which I had struggled when I was their age, despite our very different backgrounds. I watched them strive for a language in which to express their own creative selves, attempt to make meaning out of their own interpretations of the world around them, and lose themselves in the exploration of their tasks. I was reminded of my own struggle to deal with these same challenges. Listening and observing are two important tools which I have constantly used in the classroom to gather insight into these students. According to Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986) in *Women's Ways of Knowing*, these are important tools women can use when searching for an ever changing self.

However, it is not enough just to listen to and to observe others; I had to use these same tools to gather further insight about myself. Belenky et. al. would call me a subjective knower -- one for whom the source of knowledge is located in the self. Listening to one's own inner voice becomes primary as knowledge is seen as being based

on one's own personal experience and intuition. The subjective knower believes in multiple truths and interpretations, but regards them as personal and private and finds it difficult to communicate them or generalize from them. For years I have collected notes and images in journals, but they were scattered everywhere. I was ready to try to connect these disconnected observations -- ready to solve the puzzle of my own creative process. I began searching for a language for these collected images, a language that could express the inner subjective way of knowing that is most comfortable for me. I did not realize when I originally recorded my observations that they were a way of learning about the self without revealing the self (Belenky et al., 1986). I did not realize that there was growth occurring in the silence I was experiencing at the time and in the images that were appearing. Over a period of time, while listening to and observing the students I have taught, I collected data from their experiences. Reflecting on that data touched familiar themes in my own story and I began to develop a dialogue between my own inner language and its outer expression.

Initially the inner monologue and external images were unconnected and were screaming for me to see their significance. The connections appeared amateurish, awkward and raw. The story that is told on the following pages illuminates the process that I used to better clarify those connections. The dialogue continues to spontaneously surface and is developing into a form of expression which can better be understood and accepted by me and by others with similar experiences. The story does not end with the final page of this dissertation. Like all lived experience, the process of gaining voice, of making meaningful connections and expressing them will continue.

There is a repeated search for a way of unifying the dialogue between the inner and outer expression that results in a demand for action. This action says Susanna Egan (1984), may result in the development of an outer expression of creativity (through

art, music, writing or teaching, etc.) and is always changing depending upon the searcher's growing level of expertise. The creative individual is always searching for that method of expression which will bridge her own inner and outer languages.

Over these last thirteen years, I have realized that the dialogue for which my students and I were searching would have deeper meaning and clarity for me if I could write it down in a manner that would allow me to examine all of the life patterns as a whole. When the life patterns of the four girls were viewed, I realized that the importance of writing each narrative changed my focus to a different perception when reviewing my own life. This dissertation is the result of that effort.

Creativity - A Way of Being

I chose creativity as the focus for this paper so that I can begin examining the patterns defined by theorist and begin to connect them to a larger pattern. It is that pattern which examines how creative individuals come to learning -- come to creating. Many of the variables defining creativity are expressed in the students with whom I work.

Theorists have found it difficult to agree on a definition of creativity. I. A. Taylor (1960) felt that the difficulty in defining creativity came in the failure to differentiate between the various levels of creativity which he identified as: expressive creativity -- independent expression in which skills, originality, and quality are unimportant; productive creativity -- production of a product through mastery over some portion of the environment; inventive creativity -- ingenuity in seeing new uses for old parts (no new basic idea is involved); innovative creativity -- a significant alteration in the basic foundations or principles of a theory (needs highly developed abstract conceptualizing skills), and emergentive creativity -- ability to absorb the experiences which are commonly provided and from this to produce something new. Many have explored

creativity and have tried to pass on their impressions to us. Each interpretation of creativity demonstrates how complicated and interwoven is our search for meaning and personal expression.

Several areas of research in creativity have been identified by Taylor and Getzels (1975): the creative personality (Guilford, 1959; Gowan, Khatena & Torrance, 1979; Helson, 1967); creative problem formulation (Andrews & Gordon, 1970; Getzel, 1982); the creative process (Wallas, 1926; Ghiselin, 1952; Torrance, 1967); creative products (Ghiselin, 1963; Besemer & Treffinger, 1981); creative climate (Torrance, 1962; Abby & Dickson, 1983), creativity and mental health (Maslow, 1963); and creativity and intelligence (Terman, 1925, Getzel & Jackson, 1962). These separate areas of creativity have been researched over the years by theorists working in many different fields of study. None of these theorists has attempted a study of how or if these components might be woven together to create patterns in the lives of individuals.

They do, however, identify some of the components which define creativity: sensitivity to problems (Bransford & Stein, 1984); fluency of ideas and associations (Thurstone, 1938; Guilford, 1968); flexibility (Guilford, 1968; Helson & Crutchfield, 1970); originality (MacKinnon, 1963); redefinition or the ability to rearrange (Henle, 1962); analysis or the ability to abstract, elaborate, synthesize and find closure (Rogers, 1983); and coherence of organization and evaluation (Ghiselin, 1952; Huck & Sandler, 1979). These components may be important to and may be present in the individuals of this study. However, they do not exist in isolation, but are apparent in the patterns which are woven by the complex lives of these individuals.

Vera John-Steiner (1958) searched for patterns in thinking among the sixty individuals she interviewed for her study, *Notebooks of the Mind* (1985). She saw thinking as a powerful tool to be used by the creative individual and was interested in

how individuals reveal self-knowledge about thinking. Her work paved the way for us to view the entire creative life as a personal journey.

The personal journey will reveal the individual's struggle to bring meaning to the inner and outer expression as it releases itself through the creative process. John-Steiner (1985, p. 220) states that, "Creativity requires . . . an intense awareness of one's active inner life combined with a sensitivity to the outer external world." The individuals in this study have this intense awareness of an active inner life and an extreme sensitivity to the world around them.

There are two dynamics at work for the highly creative individual. The first is bringing the inner language to the conscious level and the second is the development of the experience of expressing the inner and outer languages to their highest levels.

The major difficulty is with the first dynamic. The pictures in the mind will often dictate the pattern of the concept, but the words used to describe the pattern may not appear immediately and, when concentrated upon, may even have different interpretations. In *The Tacit Dimension*, Polanyi recognizes that knowing took place before there was a philosophy to reflect on it and that it can be genuine even if one cannot perfectly explain it. (Webb, 1988).

This difficulty was addressed by Vera John-Steiner (1985) in her study of more than sixty "experienced thinkers" -- those individuals who are able to hold an idea long enough to unlock and shape its power in the varied contexts of shared human knowledge. John-Steiner found that the inner language is often expressed in symbolic form in notebooks, letters or on scraps of paper, but these symbols often represent an outer expression, sometimes known to the individual and sometimes unknown. She also states that "The full realization of generative ideas requires a sustained, often painful, dialectic between condensed inner thoughts and their realizations" (1985, p. 222)."

The struggle to resolve tension and to create a bridge between the inner and outer expression is also part of the quest for self-understanding. The difficulty in bringing meaning to a conscious level causes the ideas and images to begin to take on a tension that eventually evolves into a form of expression chosen by the creative individual (John-Steiner,1985). However, as the inner language surfaces and becomes expressed outwardly, the expressive form must have meaning not only for the creative individual but also for others. After examining this inner language in *Notebooks of the Mind*, John-Steiner (1985) went one step further. She felt that it was not enough to examine the isolated skills and languages of a creative person. She felt that the skills, languages of thought and character of a creative person were interwoven and had to be treated as a way of being that permeates the life of individual.

I believe we can take John-Steiner's conclusion even further. My twenty plus years in education have led me to believe that there is no single way of being creative. I believe that an individual may enter the creative moment at any point and, if the mind is allowed to incubate from that point, the self will emerge through a thought, an idea, a painting, a mathematical expression, etc. But the creative way of being expresses itself as an individual pattern. MacKinnons (1960) felt that there is no single mold in which all who are creative will fit. This study will examine that idea.

The Process: Phenomenological Inquiry

Three methodological questions are raised: Which inquiry process best lends itself to viewing the patterns the creative individual weaves into a life tapestry? Which process will generate methods that are descriptive and holistic? In which methods will patterns of replication be most noticed or perceived? Phenomenological inquiry appears to be the best method of answering these questions.

The methods used in phenomenology, according to Brogdon et al. (1975), yield descriptive data which enable the phenomenologist to see the world as subjects see it. Heidegger states that "The job of phenomenology is to bring into light, to make it the theme of methodical investigation." In doing this, "Little by little the structures and modes of being are uncovered or entombed" (Thevenaz, 1962, p. 55). It is by doing phenomenology that the phenomenological method itself becomes gradually clarified. It is a fact of history that even the great initiators seldom know very well themselves what they are doing until they do it. Thevenaz (1962) gives the example of Galileo doing scientific research without being able to state clearly or thematically what he was doing.

Because of its richness and flexibility, phenomenology has been able to illuminate in many ways the theoretical foundations of depth-psychology, social studies, education and other disciplines. In fact there is not any phenomenon, in the phenomenological sense of the term, or any area of human experience, from the universally valid categorical judgments of reflexive consciousness to the hidden pre-logical and pre-conceptual structures of the individual and collective subconscious, that falls outside the competence of phenomenological analysis (Thevenaz, 1962). It is open to all kinds of human experience.

A phenomenologist helps illuminate hidden bridges. He or she must establish writing, speaking, and/or artistic abilities to convey his or her experiences to some who initially may not be able to relate to his or her insights and findings (Gregorc, 1988). The difficulty in the phenomenological method comes in interpreting the experiences from the subject's own perspective (Brogdon et al., 1975) and not the researcher's. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to agree or disagree with the students' views of their experiences, but rather to represent their interpretations of their experiences to

reflect on similar experiences in my own development, and then to view patterns from the perspectives of all individuals involved in the study.

Methods

The methods I used to gather information are descriptive techniques which help to illuminate the way creative people weave their lives. These methods included narrative inquiry and informal interviewing.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991). Narrative inquiry is being used increasingly in studies of educational experience, because it has been long claimed that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. It is a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds. It involves time and space relationships and establishes the voice of the researcher and the individuals in the study (Connelly et al., 1990, p. 4). Britzman (in press) wrote:

Voice is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community. . . . The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process. . . . Voice suggests relationships: The individual's relationship to the meaning of her/his experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process.

It is important to the process of narrative inquiry that all participants have a voice within the relationship, but it is equally important to remember not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research (Connelly et al., 1990). The language for narrative inquiry is still under development. Since it focuses on experience and the qualities of life, narrative inquiry is considered to

be qualitative research whose criteria do not rely on validity, reliability, and generalizability. It accepts other criteria such as apparency and verisimilitude (Van Maanen, 1988). Other criteria are being developed.

As each narrative is told, there is a possibility for feelings of connectedness to develop between the researcher and the practitioner (Connelly et al., 1990). The narrative researcher describes the lives that are collected, tells stories about them and writes narratives of the experience. This describes the process I have used. I have collected the stories told by the students, told stories about them, told my own story and written the story of the patterns that connected our lives.

Nita is the adult educator writing this paper. Her journey is chronicled to include her experiences when she was the age of each of the students. Her story is a product of reflecting about her past while sitting in her study.

Informal Interviewing

Informal interviewing, focused around a specific topic, allows the person being interviewed to talk about a particular area of interest (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The researcher picks up the topics and issues that the respondent initiates and continues to probe more deeply into the area of interest. The person being interviewed has an opportunity to define the content of the interview and the direction of the study (Bogdan et al., 1982).

How I Will Proceed

The questions asked the four creative females interviewed for this study were centered around the areas studied by Vera John-Steiner (1985) in her book, *Notebooks of the Mind*. They concerned the earliest developments of her interests; the nature of her training; the shaping of her craft and creative intensity; some descriptions of the daily

routines; and the forms of expression of each. The questions were centered on the unfolding of the creative life. Some of the questions were:

- What is your definition of creativity?
- Tell me about your first memory of being creative.
- In what ways do you view yourself as being a creative person?
- Describe your temperament and personality.
- Tell me about your creative form of expression.
- Elaborate on the difficulties experienced perfecting your form of expression.
- What kind of support do you need to be who you are?
- Describe what it feels like when you are most creative?
- Do you know why you create?
- Are there any ways you would improve your educational experience if you could? Elaborate.

The information taken from these questions and the information gathered from my own reflective autobiographical memories were then examined for patterns. As the interviewer, I followed the process of association, linking images and ideas in ways that eventually revealed a whole pattern of being for each individual as well as for myself. I collected clusters of information and connected them with other clusters in a coherent and confident manner, knowing the result to be richly my own.

By probing the lives of the students, I created a context for my own life. I have revealed common themes that bind the lives of the students with the events and descriptions that reflect my own life. This is a narrative of our lives as we have lived them and our perceptions of the worlds in which those lives have taken place. To me the sum of these experiences create a point of view -- a particular way of seeing meanings in my world as I express these meanings in words, realizing that whatever I say, write

or do adds to the pattern for discovering self. These patterns will not necessarily have the same meaning for all individuals. They are windows of perception into the life of one educator, her students and the inner world they have in common.

Effects On Education

It has been my observation in classrooms of the gifted, that each creative person appears to use an individual way of knowing in order to reach a heightened level of personal expression, and that this process is unlikely to be shared by others. In *Women's Ways of Knowing* Belenky et al. (1986) write about the different ways of knowing that women have cultivated. Women have learned to value subjective ways of knowing, such as listening to a personal inner voice, to intuitively know truth and knowledge. Subjective knowing has been belittled by society, neglected entirely in our institutions and determined to be of lesser value in most of our schools. Whatever way of knowing is used, the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self are intricately interwoven for women and are inseparable according to Belenky and her colleagues. The women they interviewed brought to their awareness the fact that, for many of them, the real lessons learned did not necessarily come out of their academic work, but from relationships with friends and teachers, life crises, and community involvements. They also believed that concepts of truth and knowledge that are valued today have been shaped throughout history by the male-dominated majority culture. In order to see women's needs we are going to have to examine the subjective worlds of creative women in informal settings (Belenky et al., 1986).

I suspect that new ways of knowing will be more freely acknowledged in our schools as education moves away from frameworks of strict conformity. It now stresses the aggregation of standards that apply levels of restrictions on what the student will be exposed to and what he or she will not be able to access within the school environment.

As education moves from this lock-step pattern, we will need to accept multiple ways of knowing. It is my feeling that strict ways of learning, where there is not a blending of the many different ways of knowing, are not compatible with the unfolding of creative lives because the pressure to conform is perhaps the major inhibitor of creative growth. Theorists such as Crutchfield (1962) and Rogers (1983) have argued that freedom from control is necessary for creativity to unfold. This study examines how five individuals have responded to the present system. I will let their own words identify what problems have been present for them. I will conclude the study with a statement of my beliefs about what is needed in reforming current educational practice to better accommodate multiple ways of knowing.

CHAPTER II
THE INTERVIEWS
Emily's Journey

Background and Personality

Emily is the youngest of the four students and was in the third grade at the time of these interviews. I have known her for several years in an educational environment and taught her in a gifted class for a year. She is very vivacious and outgoing. She comes from an upper middle class family and is the older of two children. Both of her parents have university degrees. The information about her comes from my experience with her in the classroom and from interviewing her specifically about what it means to be creative. It was arranged by her family that the interviews would be held in her home during the absence of her parents so that it would be easier to fall into a comfortable informal interview. Emily was eager to participate and she expressed herself easily and quickly.

Earliest Memory of Being Creative

Emily's first memory of being creative goes back to her preschool days.

I used to go to preschool nursery back then . . . and I'd go to . . . we'd have a little free time and then we would sing a few songs while the other guys would go out to play and I would sit there and I'd go . . . I want to sing, again, again. And I kept singing it together and I wouldn't want to stop.

In kindergarten she wrote a poem about trees for a Parent Teacher Association contest called *Reflections* . She did not win and for three years since that time she has been trying to win first place.

My favorite kind of writing is creative and funny writing like the poem I wrote for *Cricket Magazine*. They would never . . . *Reflections* would never have liked that one. I doubt it. Well, I don't know what they like. They kind of . . . like the short simple ones about things like mountains . . . rivers . . . like that. One of the reasons I was mad was because, well, you know, the third place one won over mine and it was just two sentences about nothing and that one was not creative and it had no imagination and it was wrong . . . and you know . . . the most I won on the *Reflections* was honorable mention when I was in kindergarten.

Feelings About Being a Creative Person

Q: Do you think creative thinkers are different from other people?

Creative thinkers tend to do something more than they are asked to . . . more than they . . . really . . . take it more bigger . . . make it more fun . . . make it more interesting. Some people don't do that. See I'm really happy in the school that I'm in. Well, in the class I'm in, 'cause its a level three A.G. class. And most level three A.G. [Academically Gifted] people I would call creative thinkers. And, it's really fun being in that class because they think the same way I do.

The Level Three Gifted Class was developed by a city school system in 1989 for those students whose needs would best be served in a self-contained class of academically gifted children. Emily first entered the class in the third grade. The students were screened for aptitude, achievement, and classroom performance. The creativity component was not a priority but many of the students chosen for the class were known for their creative thinking in their regular gifted classes.

Emily feels that creative people are more expansive in their thinking:

[They] make it more interesting. [Pause] A creative person goes more deeply into things. To be creative is to go into whatever you are good at, art, stories and you can really do them. You don't just do them! You do them!

She feels that she was born to create.

Because for one thing I like writing and that's kind of what I'm made to do. [Pause] I guess I was born creative.

When asked how it feels to be creative, she responds:

It feels really good in a way. Ummm. It's kind of [Pause] not on earth anymore. You're just dealing or being with the story or what you are doing.

Q: Do you know why you create?

Well, because for one thing I like to create things and I feel good when I have created something and I like it . . . and then I show it to everybody and they like it. It just feels good to do that and I feel that it is good for my mind to do that. It's like exercising my mind and it allows me to think more. . . .

School Experiences

Emily is well read and in school is reading above grade level. Instead of reading out of textbooks, she is reading novels such as *Bridge to Teribithia*, *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Danny, the Champion of the World*.

They have really nice stories. Right now we are reading *The Sign of The Beaver*. I'm not sure who that's by. Of course, we've read the first and second chapters. Well, actually I've read through the twentieth chapter or something because I like the book. I brought it home and read it because I like it. And I've had alot of fun doing it.

Some of her ideas for the stories that she writes come from the books she has read and others from everyday experiences.

Little bits of them come off stories I've read . . . stories I've heard . . . things I have heard . . . things I have done in my life . . . stuff like that. I think of the basic idea. I think, oh, I know a neat story. How about this and this and this. . . .

Although she enjoys her present school situation, she has much to say about the improvement of schools in general. Her biggest frustration is classroom textbooks. She feels that the textbooks are too repetitive and that the books need to be more realistic.

You wouldn't spend half the year if you were in the third grade doing addition and the math books would be kind of, a little more different than. . . . You do the second grade math book and three quarters of the third grade math book is exactly the same! As is three quarters of the second grade math book and the fifth grade math book is also the same as the fourth grade math book! I like to think about things, like the math book says, that are just ridiculous. The math book would round one hundred fifty to two hundred. That's outrageous, ridiculous! That's teaching you. . . . Well, if a hundred and fifty people do something it's about two hundred people. Well, that's not right!

She also feels that students should take more of an role in their learning, become more active instead of sitting in their seats repeating what is said in the books.

Creative Forms of Expression

When she writes, her characters feel real, but she does not become them. They are there with her and she watches them in her imagination and writes stories about them. She travels to a magical land and watches the characters she writes about.

Usually I'm just staring into space really . . . if you call that with your eyes open. . . . Like a dream, you see yourself but you are yourself. My imagination can play Emily. It can see Emily but it's still playing Emily. [Emily is the name she has given the character in her story.] Sometimes after I'll hear something I will sometimes hear things and put them down but before I put them down in my story, I'll usually picture them. [Pause]

During these long pauses Emily stares into space quite intently as if viewing something on an inner screen, searching for a language she wants to use. If I start to speak she holds up her hand for me to wait. Then she turns and looks at me and begins again. She describes it as "going to different places in her mind."

Like I might go to a magical land or meet an Indian from a thousand years ago. I might go into something magical. . . . Like having a wishing. . . . I wish for something like a huge mountain of candy . . . and things like that.

Often times these "pictures in her mind" go beyond imagining, according to Emily, because the pictures acquire a life of their own and want to do other things besides what Emily would like them to do. In her own words she says:

Well, I usually try to go with the one I see. Once in a while you see a picture and the picture has these things you are not imagining, like that kind of bothers me 'cause it's not what I've been thinking of. [Long pause] Sometimes when it changes in the story it changes what I see.

A similar thing happens when she is reading a book:

I'll be reading a book that I enjoy and I'll be picturing the story in my mind and it will suddenly have this illustration and say there's a little girl in the story named . . . ummm . . . say Charlotte, say. . . . I picture that she has brown hair . . . right? That kind of messes me up 'cause every time I'm thinking of her, I think of the short brown hair one and then I think of the long . . . ummmm . . . with the long blonde braids . . . ummm . . . braided one . . . and I'm like [shakes her hands] which one is it? I try to think of my own.

Whether the stories come from her mind or from the books she has read, she considers the characters in her imagination to be very real!

. . .the characters get to feel really there . . . like . . . they're there with me and I'm watching them and I'm writing a story about them. . . .I'll make that journey and travel there and see the Indian and watch him and write down what he does. And then I'll watch the Indian travel to my time and I'll write down what he does. . . .When I'm writing a story you can't tell that I think it's real but it's not that. . . . It is just that I'm there beside the characters writing down what they do and seeing weird characters and laughing at them. . . .The characters get to feel really there . . . like . . . they're there with me and I'm watching them and I'm writing a story about them.

But she has never encountered anything that would scare her and she has enough control over her imaginings to eliminate the things that do scare her. For instance:

Well sometimes when I read stories, things are kind of scary and I can't imagine writing them. The characters are real to you and when the character dies or something, but I really never let that happen.

When asked when she knew a story was really good, she said:

When you can see it happening. When it takes you away to that place . . . if you read the story and you are like . . . OH BOY! WOW! A STORY, WOW! YEAH! If you are reading about say a magical land and you are reading about this magical land and then you are just sitting reading about it. It means nothing to you. It's not a

good poem in my opinion . . . but if it will take you away with its words up into wherever it is and . . . then it's probably a pretty good story.

Emily has the ability to pop in and out of her imagination whenever she is bored. It began before she started school.

When I was about five I used to hate to take naps! And what I would do is lie down in my bed and just stare at the ceiling for awhile and I would go . . . mmmm . . . I can't sleep so I would go into my mom's room [in her mind] and have a different creature . . . and I would go MOMMIE, MOMMIE THERE'S A GIANT IN MY ROOM . . . in my mind. And she would go, 'OH, NO!' And, she would act really scared and say, 'DONT WORRY HE'S A GOOOOOOD ONE!'

Each day Emily would create a new monster. In school it was a bit different. If she was bored, she would simply retreat into one of her stories, but she could easily pick up the thread of the conversation if called upon to answer a question.

You know when we were talking about mammals and all that stuff. Of course I already knew that. I would just sit there like that [stares into space]. And my teacher would say, 'Emily, Emily, read that sentence.' 'What? Oh, O.K.!' [Laughter] And then I would go back to my mind because I was bored.

Blocks to Creativity

Things that interfere with her creativity are having to write about things that do not interest her, having to limit her words, people giving her word choices to use, having to write things down before she is ready to, and not being able to follow through once she begins.

Sometimes things can get in the way if I . . . if there is something I'm doing. If there is a story I'm writing, usually the story is very creative but, sometimes limits of words . . . ummmm . . . will hold me back a tiny bit because I have to take out words. You know, the first time I write the story I try to hold back on words but it will still have more than the limit. I've got to keep editing it and editing it in ways that I don't want. . . .

When she is stuck she does not want to stop, but when she is writing well she does not mind stopping. She explains this when she says:

Because then I'll be eager to get back to it and know what I'm going to say next and I can . . . and the trick is I learned that . . . don't . . . don't just go. I have to do this and have to do this, and keep going until you get stuck 'cause then you are stuck and . . . and it takes you awhile to get back and you don't want to get back . . . but if you are going good, I think, that you want to get back to it . . . like you have the need to write some more.

Nita's Journey - Part I: Early Life Through Early School Experience

Background and Personality

Nita came from a poor middle class family. She was the oldest of four children. The first four years of her life were spent in a Polish community in New England. Her parents had high school degrees but they did not have much time to spend with her during these formative years. They had to work hard to provide food for their table.

Nita was an extremely sensitive child. At an early age she was already singing and had a love for sound. For the first seven years of her life, she was allowed the freedom to run wild -- first on a chicken farm in the country where she lived with her grandparents, then in different city communities in New England and finally in the jungle when her family moved to Central American when she was four. Her father worked there as a civil servant for the United States government. She did not know that she was creative and no one ever talked about her abilities.

Earliest Memory of Being Creative

Nita's memory of creative moments come, not from the setting in school, but from happenings around her home.

When I was growing up we didn't hear the word creative. It really wasn't in our vocabulary. But I can remember my mother and other people around me saying that I had a very large pair of lungs for so small a child. My parents and friends

called me talented because I was always wanting to sing. I could also sit for hours listening and categorizing the sounds around the farm and woodland area where I lived and I became very good at mimicking the sounds of the birds and insects that I heard.

Everyone in Nita's family was creative to some degree and her talents were not considered unusual. The family worked hard and played hard. Her father played the piano and violin. Her mother created beautiful handcrafted works of art. Her grandmother created delicious pastries and other baked goods without ever looking at a recipe. Her grandfather played the tuba and everyone sang and danced the native songs and dances of the homeland.

The word creativity was unknown to Nita. She did not know that every time she wove her stories or sang her songs or sewed or baked or arranged the pebbles that she had collected that she was being creative. This was just the way the people she knew lived their lives.

Feelings About Being a Creative Person

Q: Do you think creative thinkers are different from other people?

I would have to say that some creative thinkers experience more uncontrolled feeling when they are young. I often refer to myself as raw energy when I reflect on this early period of my life because I really couldn't control the amount of feeling that I put into everything that I did. When I exploded into song my parents saw me as getting out of control.

Although, I knew I was different I didn't know how or why. I just knew that I experienced things to a fullness that other people didn't quite reach and I wasn't allowed to share the experience fully with others because they didn't understand what I was experiencing.

At age five Nita had a deep desire to express herself to anyone who would listen.

Mother said I was like a magnet drawing people to me wherever I went because I had to sing and talk to everyone. People would come off the street and give me things or try to feed me. She can even remember once putting a sign around my

neck saying, 'Do not feed!' But the more verbal I became, the more I wanted to be heard for what I had to say and no one would believe the stories I had to tell.

The stories that she had to tell were pretty amazing to those individuals in her surroundings who were not having similar experiences. She would meet strangers and want to know about the colors she saw around their heads, or she may have told her parents about the song she heard when looking at a plant and received a funny smile from them in response. She wanted to express herself and the more she wanted answers to what she saw, the more she was told she had a fanciful imagination. The emotional outbursts became more frequent and she became known for her violent nature. When the rejections of her experiences became unbearable, she began to withdraw. She went from a very explosive child to a very quiet, shy child. The emotions she felt kept being pushed further and further inside.

When asked how did it felt to be creative or talented, she said,

The only form of expression that was encouraged was my singing. This I could do endlessly. There was a euphoria associated with opening my mouth and letting the sounds out. The music sang itself throughout my whole body. I could hear the sounds that I made and sing at the same time.

Nita's parents and friends considered her different but no one really cared about why or if she was creative. Nita says she sometimes felt driven to express herself, but creativity was still viewed as something that happened at home or in the community during those few leisure moments when all the family gathered to participate in one of the social and religious rituals. Nita was happier out-of-doors and that's where she wanted to be.

School Experiences

When she was about three or four her parents took her to live in the Canal Zone because her mother was very ill and not expected to live very long. The climate was

supposed to help make her last days more comfortable. Nita's mother surprised the doctors and survived. Meanwhile, Nita was given much freedom to explore her surroundings. She found the sounds and sights of the tropics to be more brilliant than those in New England. She became very sensitive to light and had to wear very dark sunglasses.

After World War II the family returned to live once again with Nita's grandparents in New England. When her grandmother was not working the farm, she would take Nita for walks in the woods and point out the herbs, other plants and all the wonders that surrounded them. Nita's love for and curiosity about the earth grew stronger.

Before going to school, the only written words she knew were the written words read out loud from a Polish newspaper while she sat on her grandfather's knee. She would not listen to the meaning of the words but to the sounds they made and the intonations of the voices speaking them. She would sing everything, touch everything, and move to the music in her mind.

Her first memory of school is the first grade. She was attending a one-room schoolhouse in New England. Both of her parents were Polish and the teacher in the school that she was attending was also Polish so there was not the added tension of having to learn English right away. Most everyone spoke Polish.

There was a mixture of English and Polish. I learned as a person coming from another language would learn, by listening to the sound of the language as it was spoken to the students. Most of the students came from Polish backgrounds and were also learning the English language.

The Polish culture was a verbal culture with emotional pull and spiritual beliefs which closely related them to the earth. Nita would have been comfortable learning to read, but that was not what was important to her at the time. She was frequently found listening to

some sounds from within her or to the outward sounds around her or simply found staring into space.

I can remember constantly being reprimanded for not paying attention but it wasn't really that I wasn't paying attention. It was that I was trying to shut out the noises around me.

The disharmony of the sounds came when the students started reading the words out of the books. She noticed that the whole tonal sound changed. The monotone voices of her classmates had no music to them. She could remember thinking how tone deaf the sounds were as she was asked to read them. She would shut her ears to the harsh sounds and continue to listen instead to the music within her head.

There were further problems. She can remember struggling over the alphabet, not realizing that the letters could be put together to make words because she focused on the colors that were dancing around a person's mouth when he or she was speaking. She could also hear the music of the person's voice speaking to her as well as her own inner music. She focused on these sights and sounds that people called her "imagination."

It is hard to explain to someone who has never had the experience but I'll try. . . . At this age when asked to listen to the sound a letter made . . . to me this meant listening to the sound inwardly. This was not the sound that people made for me outwardly. Also, the sound I would hear in my head had no picture, only a color association and it did not resemble the sound or picture others gave to me.

Her inner active mind held no pictures when the words were spoken. There was only a conglomeration of color and sound. School was not a pleasant experience for her because she did not understand the processes that were being introduced to her. The early school years were painful years. Talking about them unleashed some of the pain and anger associated with the experience.

Creative Form of Expression

Nita's inner language was filled with the music of her father, the music in nature, and the fantasy of the inner world that she created to escape the struggles that were going on around her. She used it to escape her mother's illness and the family's struggles to make ends meet. The whole imaginary world which existed in her mind was strengthened every time she stepped outside or went for a walk in the woods behind her house. Each creature, each plant had a song to sing and she would listen for the music. She loved sound -- even the sound of her own voice. While other children were putting together words, she was busy interpreting the sounds and colors from her inner language and from the pictures of color she saw circling individuals.

If I would meet a new sound or color, I would want to stop right there and analyze it. This could have been in a class-room or in a shopping place. I would have a mammoth explosion . . . right there . . . if I wasn't left alone to process what I was experiencing. My mother would walk away and leave me there until I finished. She would call it my 'temper tantrums.'

It took a long time before the realization came that some of these same sounds and colors could be interpreted as letters and words. When people tried to make her focus on the letters, she became angry and stubborn. She refused to learn to read. For her, each letter became a sound and then a color before she ever heard the real name of the sound. She listened for the song of the word. At age seven she did not want to take the time to transform the sounds and colors into a formal language. Also, at this time in her life she did not know how to do so. Everything was trial and error. Instead she used the world of the plants and animals around her to make to her world less dull.

I didn't mind telling people what I was experiencing at first because I didn't know then that I was experiencing something different. In fact I wanted someone to acknowledge that what I saw was what they were seeing, but it rarely occurred that way. Instead it felt like I was learning to read three languages at the same time: Polish, English as it was taught in school and my own interpretation of

matching the symbols in my mind with outer symbols. So when I composed stories at this age it was similar to what I [later] experienced in high school [in Panama] when giving a speech. I had another language to interpret. I would begin in the language spoken, Spanish, and sprinkle the other two languages in automatically.

Blocks to Creativity

There were constant restraints being put on Nita's life. People did not give her the reassurance that everything was all right in her world. In fact it was just the opposite.

Everyone was always telling me [that] what I was experiencing was just my imagination, but they didn't take the time to tell me how I was different. What I was learning was that I was not like everyone else. . . .I had to learn by myself how I was different and I did this by constantly observing and watching others.

She was encouraged to sing and dance but she did not get the support she needed from the people around her to help her express herself in other ways. This resulted in emotional upheavals. The only place she found peace was in nature.

Patterns in the Lives of Emily and Nita

Emily and Nita came from different social backgrounds. Emily came from a comfortable middle-class family. Nita's background centered around strong Polish cultural ties in a lower middle class family. While Emily's parents were financially stable, Nita's parents were struggling to acquire financial stability and had to rely on support from their extended family. There was also the added problem of Nita's mother's illness during these years. Nita's parents were unable to offer the close nurturing that Emily receives. Emily's mother provides her with the interaction that make her feel safe and happy. Emily spends more time with her parents. Nita spent more time with nature.

Both Emily and Nita had very active inner languages that were shared with closest friends and families. Emily's magical kingdom, taken from her inner language, became the stories and poems that she wrote. Nita's magical land continued to grow into the sounds and pictures that she created within her inner mind and would burst through the surface in the melodies that she would sing.

Emily is already perfecting her craft and, at this time in her life, has had enough support to continue to do so. Both teachers and relatives encourage her in her writing and listen to her creations. At school she is encouraged to write formally and for competitions. At home her mother provides the time for her to write for herself and for others.

Nita's outer and inner worlds were shared sparingly so that her parents would not find out and tell her once again that what she was experiencing was only her imagination. She remembers screaming at them and running and hiding whenever they tried to take this world away from her through their denial. She learned to be cautious and selective about sharing her thoughts.

Emily is competitive and versatile in her writing. She could just as easily write a poem, essay or a legend. She has been carrying a novel around in her mind now for six months, but it's not ready to put it down on paper. While it is still in her mind, she can change and rearrange her thoughts. However, once it is written and placed in a form of her choosing she is more reluctant to change its contents. She is just as able to write in the car as in her classroom during a boring lesson or in her own room.

Nita was not competitive when composing stories or songs. She sang for the pure enjoyment of the experience. She would hear the songs being sung in her head over and over again until she finally attempted to express the sounds in song. Sometimes the songs would originate in her head. Other times they would originate from bits and pieces

that she heard while going through her day. Though she wanted to share them whenever they were completed, the audiences were not always available. Unlike Emily's stories, Nita's songs were sung only occasionally to friends and for the most part were kept in her head. She could sing more freely than she could share the stories that she created. She learned at an early age that most of the adults in her life were not interested in the stories she had to tell and, the final blow, did not take them seriously.

Emily's stories came from her very vivid imagination, from the books that she read and from her everyday experiences. Nita's stories and songs came from nature and the world of her imagination. She enjoyed being read to but this occurred very rarely and she could not read in English.

Like Emily's characters, Nita's were real too, because Nita became the characters and acted out their worlds in her real life -- not on paper but orally and in her mind and with her total being. The difference was that Emily was able to observe and interact mentally with her imaginary figures but Nita was her song or her story. Nita's experience was a total mental and emotional experience. Emily could observe and change the imaginary if she did not like what was happening. Nita could not. The whole experience would have to be acted out before she could make any changes.

Emily was able to view the stories that she created in her mind as exercising her mind. This may have been what Nita was doing but it was not recognized by her or by others. It certainly was not considered normal behavior in school. During Nita's youth, teachers viewed day dreaming or staring into space as wasting time. The only thing that was important was learning to read, write, and do arithmetic. Nita does not know if this is why she fought learning the three R's or if her way of knowing was just too different to exist in the accepted mode. However, she was to experience a deeper withdrawal into the inner world when she moved away from the farm and into the city. She changed from

an boisterous, extraverted child to a subdued, introverted, child. Emily on the other hand did not experience a shift in her personality. She also found learning to read and write quite easy. She was recognized as being gifted in the first grade and placed in a self-contained gifted class in the third grade. She was also encouraged to use her imagination; Nita was not.

Emily was able to view her school experience rationally and tell what she disliked about her experience and what she would change if she could. Nita's experience was viewed with much negative emotion and pain. She could not tell what she wanted changed. She just knew she did not want to be in school. She would rather have been outside by herself.

Anne's Journey

Background and Personality

Anne is a private, sensitive student. She can be assertive and has played on a community soccer team but she prefers to stay on the outside of cooperative endeavors where she can observe what is happening around her or daydream.

Anne comes from a middle class family and is an only child. Both parents are high school English teachers. Anne's mother has acted as a mentor to Anne with her writing. She also has an aunt who encourages her creative sensitivity. She is already a very gifted writer and has won a variety of awards.

Our interviews were held in the living room of her home close to her lizard and birds. She told me she felt uncomfortable talking about herself but agreed to work with me because she felt "safe" with me. She, too, has been a student of mine for two years, when she was in the first and second grades. In the fifth grade she moved to another school where I was teaching the first, second and third grade gifted students. She was a fifth grader when I interviewed her.

Earliest Memory of Being Creative

Her first memory of being creative was the summer after kindergarten when she wrote a poem about how everyone was so happy to be out of school.

Well, the summer after the first kindergarten class was out I wrote a poem about how everyone was so happy that school was out and how happy everyone was going to be for summer. I saw it because I could see it. That's how I write about it because I wasn't very developed then but I just wrote about something I saw.

When _____ School Is Out

When _____ school is out,
The children are all about.
They laugh and play
And sing all day
When _____ school is out.

The children have learned this year.
Their minds are in full gear.
The teacher gave advice.
The children have been nice.
But now they wont be here. . .

Until next year!

Feelings About Being a Creative Person

As Anne looks at herself and thinks about her feelings about being creative, she comes up with the following statements:

I think I am. I've got my own style, and, [I'm] more original.

Now she says,

My vocabulary is larger and I think that I can write [with] more detail because I can see more things . . . I'm more perceptive. I see more things . . . far more than what [things] are to other people . . . something else [things] could be. A tree is a tree to a person that only looks at one thing. I look at it with more detail. It can be a person or it can be anything. It can be a spider. It can be a lot of things more than a tree. [Where I have inserted words Anne used hand movements while speaking].

Anne feels that this deep perception is what helps make her different. She extends this deep perception to all forms of life. She does not feel it is something she was born with but she says anyone having this deep sense of perception can be creative.

I think probably that if someone is sensitive toward other people, other animals, and toward their growth when they are growing up, even as a small child, then they can have the ability to write poetry.

Q: What do you mean 'to be sensitive?'

It means to look at other people's point of view and know how they are feeling from that point of view. Sometimes I can think as if I am someone else. I know other people can do that but sometimes I think as if I am another person that isn't real . . . like someone traveling or something.

Q: So you feel like you are that person?

Yes, sometimes, most of the time I can make myself feel like someone else. I don't make friends in my imagination but I can make friends out of myself because I can pretend to be other people. I even talk to myself like I was another person. I can find friends in my animals and my plants. If you think of another living thing you can always find a friend.

Another way Anne sees herself as being different is that she can think as if she were someone else. She can look at things from a different perspective. She knows other people can do this, but the difference is that she thinks as if she were another person who is not real. As she says, "Like someone traveling or something." She also sees her world in contrasts and yet she sees the world as being very vibrant and living.

I think from another point of view sometimes than other people. My world is pretty much seeing things in contrast with one another. I see two people, well, take two people who do not know one another who [has] one connection and I try to put them together. I try to make the world less dull for me. I think about my cactus a lot. If you think of a cactus as a house plant it can get pretty boring but if you were to think of a cactus like some great ancestor of this planet or the cactus in a desert and it got really hot and dry it could be very beautiful. Then

the cactus can really be cherished, if you think that its' ancestors might have lived in a desert, as a living thing.

Q: Anne, how do you see yourself?

I see myself as a person who always wants to be safe but once in awhile likes a little refreshment, a little excitement because I do like excitement but most of the time I like to feel safe.

Q: Do you not feel safe now, Anne?

Well, sometime I don't feel safe because of the feeling that there's evil in the world . . . that everyone will do stuff and have no heart. When people try to do something they have no heart. I try to describe things from my point of view . . . like one poem I wrote about evil in the world, but mostly I write about nature not evil because nature is a cycle. Animals . . . nature hasn't harmed anything that is not supposed to be harmed and if we could learn to live like them for all of our lives then we really wouldn't have the trouble we have now. If we lived like them we could keep on living. We are killing everything and nobody seems to care. Everyone is trying to be alert now but the people that are polluting the most care the least.

School Experiences

Anne entered the gifted program during her primary years and I was able to work with her for two years. Her teachers were concerned that she would not qualify for the program because of her disinterest in mathematics. As a result of their simply talking to her about their concerns, Anne was able to bring her attention to a level that allowed her to concentrate enough during the testing to qualify her for placement into the program. This was a pattern that was to occur throughout the two years that I worked with her. She would often lose herself in one activity and want to continue it to the detriment of everything else that was going on around her.

The first year at this particular school the gifted program was housed in an annex that was connected to the rest of the school building. The annex was empty except for our program. I was able to give each student his or her own bulletin board to display art

work or other class work. When Anne realized that she would be able to have her own board, she worked the entire day doing the painting that was just right for the board. Most of the students put up their first attempts, but not Anne. She sat at her desk and stared at the paper for a long time before she picked up her brush to begin. When I asked how she was doing, she would answer by saying, "I'm not ready," or "I can't get it right." She could not get it worked out in her mind and she would not begin until she did.

In science she worked slowly and seriously. She tackled the experiment just the way she tried to work out her painting. She would ponder every step before continuing to the next and would not move ahead unless she fully understood the results. The science project also became a full-day project.

In her regular classroom this same pattern occurs, but is used as an escape.

Like when the teacher is giving an assignment and it really gets sort of dull and sorta I can't see and I don't really understand then I'll start thinking of something else and I keep going deeper and deeper into that thought and then when I keep going and come out of it . . . or we are halfway through with an assignment or something I'm not finished or even started because I've been working that thought but. . . . [Pause]

Anne needs time to process information to her satisfaction. She often is not given the time necessary for her to do this at a comfortable pace.

Creative Form of Expressions

Anne writes poetry but she also enjoys writing plays and, when given a lot of unused materials, she enjoys creating things with her hands. She says that when she is using her hands, she feels most creative.

When I was little I would say I wanted to be an inventor because there was one point where I was creating things a lot. We made robots and once we made a little thing out of a shoe box . . . me and my friend. Shoe boxes are great tools for being creative. Anyone can be creative with a shoe box. . . .I'm not very much like a sculptor. That may be strange but I'm not very much a sculptor. I need . . . I can do things usually with shaped materials like a shoe box, a straw, a cup, a few of

that stuff and it could be a submarine or a robot or anything with just a few household raw materials. . . .It's not really scrap art. It's not really . . . I like things when they are neat. I like making things neat, tidy and strong because I don't like. . . . Sometimes what I make doesn't turn out neat but I like them strong. I like things to be permanent.

Q: So do you feel that the majority of your poems are strong and permanent?

Yes. That's why I am reluctant to change things and give in to someone else's idea. Everything fits. Everything fits and everything is in the right shape and even. I guess everything holds everything else up. If you change, take the top off or the bottom, you lose it. I like to keep everything together.

The following poems are examples of poems that she wrote in the second grade. According to Anne, "Everything fits!"

Anger
 Under the power of gloomy, dark and
 Miserable clouds of anger,
 I feel the rain
 Pitter-pattering down my heart.
 I hear the thunder
 Roaring in my ears.
 (Anne, 2nd Grade)

The Beach

Splashing, roaring
 Up to the sandy shore
 Where the wind rushes
 So hard in the winter,
 And all the water is frozen to ice,
 All the people are close to the fire
 And fast asleep.
 By now the fire is crackling, crackling
 Out.

When spring comes,
 Some people are on the beach.
 In summer a lot of people are on the shore,
 And a whole new year is starting
 All over again

(Anne, 2nd Grade)

Even though Anne is not interested in changing the world through her poetry and other forms of expression, she wants to do something original that will serve a purpose. To Anne, through her expression, there is an attempt to give strength and permanence to her world with the hope that through her work, others will see these qualities.

Well, it doesn't always have to serve a purpose but most of the time I like to make something that would serve a purpose but I feel excited when I do something that hasn't been done before . . . really excited even if it doesn't change the world. This is when I feel most creative. Actually I never want to change the world. I just want to change one thing. For instance, I always have a sense of joy that I could buy a ramshackle house, maybe two stories, in the country and fix it up until it looked really beautiful. I like to transform things to make them more beautiful. When I see something in nature I make everything fit, and, once everything fits in my mind I am reluctant to change it. My poetry, like my house, becomes strong and permanent.

Anne structures her own life the way she composes her poems. On the inside she sees herself as very organized; everything fits. But on the outside she sees herself as very unorganized because there she organizes herself in opposites.

I'm not [a] very organized person even if I do like to keep things together. Sometimes things get separated because I'm not very organized. . . .I'm pretty organized on the inside. I can take inventory . . . and I can know what I have to do and what I don't have to do but on the outside I'm more of a person that at any instant will stuff something someplace but that helps me more, I guess, because if I stuff my math in my spelling book then I'll remember that math is in the spelling book. Whereas if I put my spelling in my spelling book I don't remember. If I put my math in my math book I would probably think my math was in my spelling book. I feel better when I'm disorganized.

Her experience with writing stories has not been as enjoyable. To use her own words, "I really never try on my stories. I never try to go very far with them." She said she loses interest in them before she can finish them. Her interest at this time is observing and writing about what she sees in nature. She sees many possibilities in the same object and feels that she can think from a more original perspective than other people.

I start writing of the thing in its other form . . . like . . . for instance. Once I wrote a poem about a feather and the whole idea of the thing was to write a poem . . . and I wrote a poem about how the feather had so many fingers but where was its arm? Then I saw the feather as lots of fingers but no arms and a backbone and stuff but I didn't see the feather.

Or,

Sometimes I can get a picture. When I think of a tree then I look at something totally different in my mind. There is always poetry in trees and in things that are two opposites. Like there's a tree . . . then there's . . . oh . . . a flower or anything different. There's a sky and ground then there's poetry in the sky and ground. There is poetry in two things that are opposites because opposites always seem to make more sense.

Q: Does your imagination play any part in your creative ability?

Yes, but probably the only part it plays in my experience is that if I don't know something but I want to write about it and don't know about it and I want to imagine what it would be like then if someone has a sensitive imagination and a portion of my imagination is sensitive . . . than they can imagine something that they have never had or something that they have never seen.

Blocks to Creativity

When Anne writes, the form presents itself to her in her mind so that when she finally puts it down on paper, it has been analyzed from her own perspective many times. It upsets her when people make suggestions but she can change things occasionally.

I always feel a sense of reluctance to change my poetry. I'm sort of a stubborn person. In fact, I don't like to change whatever I write but I try to accept the fact that I am going to have to change it sometimes and so most of the time I go through it and I see if I trip or stumble over any of the words . . . if they are out of place. Then, I can rewrite a little.

She writes best on stormy days and when she can write for herself.

I like stormy weather when the rain really comes down and the sky is gray and when I'm inside in my bedroom and next to my window and I just have a piece of paper and a pencil and it's all clean. . . . If it's clean than I'll write the best right there and sometimes . . . a lot of times, I write the best in the evening in the same place . . . in my bedroom by my window. And, on sunny days I'm not likely to be writing much poetry because stormy days are my favorite. They are more poetic to me.

Q: So what gets in the way of your being creative, Anne?

Sometimes when I'm bored I start writing. I get bored so I stop and if I've started writing knowing I'm not going to finish it then I know it's not going to be good. And, if I've written it just because . . . just because I want to please someone then I know that's not going to be good.

Nita's Journey - Part II: Early Life Through Seventh Grade

Background and Personality

A major change occurred during this period. When Nita was ten, her grandmother died and her family moved to the city. The move to the city created more problems for Nita. First, her teacher did not speak Polish. Second, the places to roam were not as peaceful as her former environment. Third, her world as she knew it was not the same anymore. There were more unknown images to process. There were more concrete structures and fewer trees and flowers. The noises and sounds were different. The sights and colors around the objects and people were more plentiful and bombarding her senses. She felt them attacking her body. There was not the opportunity to filter out where they were all coming from. The pace was quicker. The feeling of being safe started slipping away. The demands placed upon her were more than she could cope with by herself and she was often sick, slipping into a deep coma as an escape from things she could not handle.

There was a constant struggle in the fifth, sixth and seventh years of school to place the colors that she saw around objects and people into a different part of herself. The continual struggle resulted in eye problems, headaches, dizzy spells, unexplained

chest pains and comas that paralyzed her body. These symptoms were to continue throughout her life but would occur with greatest intensity during her high school and college years.

After the seventh grade, Nita was once again moved from an English speaking environment to a Spanish speaking environment when her parents moved back to Panama. Though English was spoken in the school she was to attend, she was still in the process of switching from Polish to English and now she was hearing a third language.

The switch from thinking in Polish to English occurred sometime during her high school years. For another child not as sensitive to her environment, that may have been an easy adjustment, but for Nita there were too many things going on at the physical level. She had to adjust to wearing glasses without losing them or sitting on them and, of course, had to adjust to looking through them. Her eyes went through another change. They became even more sensitive to the light and were often painful. When her eyes were examined, the only thing that she was told was that there was an excessive amount of light coming into the cornea. She was given another pair of dark glasses until her eyes could adjust to the new brightness that she was experiencing. As she struggled to cope with this influx of light, she would also develop severe chest pains resembling a heart attack. The doctors agreed that the symptoms were real, but repeated tests could not verify the diagnosis -- nothing registered on the instruments in the hospital. No one could tell her why she was experiencing these things and she eventually stopped telling her parents about her numerous problems. She would retreat to the jungle or just retreat further inside herself.

She still did not realize how different she was or that she might need special help. She had her father behind her to support her in the changes that were occurring in her life. "If you don't have a fever, Nita, you must be all right," or "You can do it," or "Nita,

you will be all right" were words that were repeated often when the strain of interpreting her physical world and her inner world became great.

While this struggle was going on at the physical level, her sister developed epileptic seizures and needed a lot of care until she and the family could accept that these seizures were going to continue for the rest of her life. At the time, Nita's problems seemed of lesser importance than what her sister was going through. More often than not Nita was left to struggle with her own changes.

Earliest Memory of Being Creative

At ten Nita was not worried about being creative. She was struggling with the emotions of a teenager.

My body made some rapid changes when I was this age and I was more emotional than before. . . . I was fully developed physically at the age of nine! It was around this time that my grandmother paid for singing lessons for me but they turned out to present even more problems.

At first everybody was encouraged by the way that Nita put all of her attention into her singing, but as the lessons progressed the instructor wanted to become more intimate. Nita eventually refused to attend the sessions. She did not tell her parents of the casual petting; she simply withdrew. By now her emotional withdrawals were becoming a set pattern so her parents did not think anything unusual about her decision to stop taking lessons.

Feelings About Being Creative

When she was ten, eleven and twelve Nita lived in the city. Her social activities revolved around the church. Though she does not remember what her feelings were about creativity during this time, she does remember being involved creatively.

There was a flair of drama about me in those days. In church I appeared in plays and I learned the native Polish dances. I was part of the group of dancers that

appeared in special programs, picnics and International festivals that were given in the city and surrounding areas. I also helped with training the younger dancers. The deep emotion that would build up in me was being released in these activities, so it was good. My aunt painted a picture of me during this period in my Polish dancing costume that shows some of the deep emotion surfacing. She entered the pastel in a contest and won an award for this work.

For Nita the feelings of creativity were acted out during these years. She did not think about being creative; she was creative.

Q: How did you feel about being creative?

I continued my music with the church where I sang with the choir and had an occasional solo but by this time I was very shy and it was difficult for me to appear in front of other people. It wasn't until I sang the first note that a peace overcame my personal emotions and I was able to continue. If I was dancing it was different. I was a different person. I became the emotions of the moment.

School Experiences

Nita's grandmother had stressed the importance of retaining her Polish proficiencies, so after attending city school, Nita went to Polish school for a few hours every day. During these two hours the students learned everything by rote by repeating after the teacher everything they were supposed to learn until they could remember their lessons.

Nita was in the fifth grade before a teacher discovered that she did not see the blackboard, much less understand or read the words out of a book. Things happened rather quickly. One day her inner language was translating the words on the page from Polish to English, from picture to thought, and the next day everything was lost to her.

It was precipitated by a move from a downstairs classroom to an upstairs classroom. She had not been given enough time to adjust to her surroundings.

It was a typical old fashioned New England school with two sets of stairways that eventually wound around to the second level. I was trying to find my way back downstairs when I fell down two flights of stairs and was rushed to the hospital. I suffered a mild concussion and other minor bruises. Then I was taken for a eye

examination. I can still remember the doctor saying, 'Read the chart.' I looked all around the room and faced one wall and began reading. The only problem was that I was facing a wall without a chart and my eyes were closed. The doctor faced me in the right direction and told me to open my eyes when I read the chart. Then he started skipping around on the chart.

When he did this, Nita was unable to read isolated words or letters or tell the direction the letters were pointing. She would have to see the chart on her inner screen in order to make the interpretation. She could see the chart with her eyes closed, reading from what she calls her inner sight, but she could not see the chart with her eyes opened. Also, she still functioned in Polish. The letters were English and so they meant nothing to her.

With the fitting of glasses, other problems occurred. First the glasses created an inability to stay physically balanced. Viewing the distance from her glasses to the floor caused severe head aches and an inability to walk properly. Before getting glasses, she had relied on feeling the heat from an object to tell its distance. Everything was changing too rapidly for her psyche to adjust.

She found she could not read the way the teachers required her to read. Nita's mind somehow knew the meaning of the page but could not interpret each word. At this point in her development she knew what the words on a page said even though she did not actually see the page as it physically appeared before her. Now with the opportunity to look back on this period of her life she says,

I realize that what I was doing was taking large portions of a page into my inner mind and reprogramming the information to come out with a changed, total meaning in English. I did not read word for word but I read for total meaning. Somewhere in my inner mind understanding occurred and it was processed down to a conscious level page by page. When the teachers started making me learn to read sound by sound I started losing my own natural way of bringing meaning to the words on the page. I became very agitated. . . . There were other things going on about the same time that I think are equally important. I was originally a left handed child, but during this time it was thought that everyone should write with *their right hand*. I was made to change writing hands along with everything else that was happening in my life. I do not have fond memories of school.

After Nita's fifth grade teacher found out that she could not read and Nita fell down the stairs in her old school house, a transition began which brought her focus from her inner language to learning a new outer language. She was also undergoing severe peer pressure during these years when she found out how she was different and wanted desperately to fit in. She wanted to be accepted but everything within her knew this would not happen unless she changed. Nita and her teachers began to work toward that change.

I was probably considered [to be] at the bottom of the class because my teachers decided to take me on as their 'project.' I was given special attention in reading and not expected to meet the criteria set out for the other students, but as we were all in the same room, I absorbed everything that was happening around me. Most of the students in my class were of upper class Jewish descent or French. I was the only Polish speaking person in the group.

Creative Forms of Expression

Nita describes herself at ten as being very sensitive to everything around her.

This sensitivity first developed when I would sit with animals or things in nature but during these three years I was to learn about the feelings of people. I could sense the way people felt and I would react to their emotions. If someone was happy I could feel this emotion within me. If someone was sad, this, too, vibrated within me. I could feel as they felt and I became good at recognizing different types of feelings. I became more and more sensitive to feelings of people. I would experience them [as my own].

As she felt the feelings of others, she would also receive pictures in her mind about the lives of others. They were not pictures that she could control or with which she could interact. They came and went unexpectedly without thought. She describes it as seeing a movie reel.

Although my mind was always occupied, I didn't seem to have as much control of what I was thinking about. Things were always popping in. Each deep feeling initiated a thought or a picture. Sometimes the picture or thought came in a

flash. Sometimes I would see a whole movie in a flash. Many times I had no earthly idea what I was thinking or seeing or if the flashes of images were generated by me or someone else. In fact, at first I did think the flashes were my thoughts. It took me a long time to distinguish the difference between my own thoughts and thoughts of others that would flash through my mind.

The only way she could cope with the intrusion was to learn to become very quiet and watchful. She had to learn how to process what was happening to her by herself.

There was a lot of confusion in my life. At first I just figured everyone had the same experiences, but by the sixth grade I learned not to talk about it. At this age I never really had anyone I could talk to about what was going on in my life. The adults I knew wanted me to listen and do what they thought was right. My peers didn't know how to relate to me and my attempts to relate to them scared many of them off when I would release a flash of information that I received about them into the conversation.

During the first part of this time, when Nita's grandmother was still alive, Nita spent a lot of time sitting around the kitchen table and watching her grandmother cook. She wanted to learn to bake the way her grandmother could.

My grandmother was wonderful in the kitchen! I was fascinated with the way she could make the most delicious Polish food without measuring anything or using a recipe and I was determined to master the technique. Of course it didn't happen. She cooked by taste and touch. She would say, 'When it tastes like this or feels like this, you know what to add!' What I did learn from this experience was that there were many different ways to make the same thing!

Nita did learn to make many of the Polish dishes but never to the perfection that her grandmother had achieved.

Blocks to Creativity

Nita developed many illnesses during this time in her life including pneumonia and other bronchial problems. These unexplained illnesses would, at times, result in deep comas when things became too much for her.

It seemed at the time that everything was going against me. There were times I felt it just might be easier to jump out of a window. . . .I actually tried it one time but it didn't work. Even at that time I had a feeling that no one was going to keep me down. I think it might have been around this time that I began developing problem solving techniques. . . .I didn't know they were problem solving techniques. . . .I would always have to ask myself, what does this person really want to know? Or, is there a problem here that I can solve and then how do they want the answer? Where were they coming from? Etc. I found myself being my own interpreter.

However, once Nita decided to learn something she kept repeating it until it was perfected.

My mother said I was very stubborn, but if I wanted to learn something I had to give it all of my attention. It was the only way I could be successful. If it involved doing something with my hands, I would repeat the act over and over again until I felt it was good. It didn't matter what anyone else said. I knew when it was good. If it was a mental act, I would retreat to a quiet place where I wouldn't be interrupted and review everything that I saw or heard on my mental screen. I would steep myself in it and daydream until something clicked in my mind or I would wait for a certain feeling to come over me. I had to be by myself. I couldn't learn with someone else around me.

Patterns in the Lives of Anne and Nita

Like Anne, Nita was very sensitive to everything around her. At first she had only the world or nature and the plants and animals within that world. She functioned by using many of the animal instincts associated with survival. She could sense feelings of approval or disapproval. She could sense the presence of another person or object before she could see it. She had a high sensitivity to sound. A person's voice quickly gave her insight into their mood or the way they would react to her. She could feel heat from an object to avoid bumping into things. She could see colors around people that changed depending upon the individual's mood.

When Anne said she sees herself as a person wanting to feel safe, Nita could relate to that. Nita, too, wanted to feel safe. The only safe place that she could see at that time was deep within herself. How people were acting and speaking was not always what was

being projected by the colors that she could see around them. She resembled a blind and deaf person struggling to make sense out of her world and though she was not physically blind or deaf, she could neither see nor hear. In this day and age, Nita would probably have been considered learning disabled.

Nita had dance and her music to release the overload of energy that she was experiencing during those years, but both forms of her outward expressions became explosions of built-up emotion. When she danced she became the dance. When she sang she became the music.

Anne on the other hand was categorized as gifted. At first her outward expression came in the form of being an inventor. Now her outward expression is poetry that reflects her deep sensitivity to the environment around her. Her school experience was boring but she did not express the anger that Nita felt whenever Nita thought about school or when Nita was doing her writing and was nurtured in both her home and her school environments. She may change to another form of expression as she grows older, but she is already aware of the need to interpret what she sees. Anne's poetry focused on what she could see with her physical eyes. The images of the outward world were internalized to create an interpretation of what she saw. Anne sees her world as contrasts in opposition and functions best when she is allowed to do so. She interprets her world as she sees these contrasts.

Nita on the other hand tried to place what she saw deep within herself in an outward expression. She functioned best when focusing on her inner world. What she saw outwardly did not correspond with what other people saw. She had to begin the process of restructuring her reality to coincide with what she thought other people saw and this often made her uncomfortable and sometimes sick. For instance, the colors that she saw around people had to be taken inside and viewed in another way. However, she

was beginning to learn how to process information inwardly to help her interpret her outer environment. While Anne only had to interpret one language in one cultural universe, Nita had to learn the cultural differences of three societies: the Panamanian, Polish and American-English societies. She had to communicate in all three while also trying to interpret her own symbolic language.

Physically there were more changes for Nita to adjust to than were required of Anne. Nita developed early. Her sexuality was violated by her music instructor. She was made to change writing hands. She had a high sensitivity to noise, which was shared by Anne. Nita's eyes had to learn to focus in a different way. She also experienced illnesses such as pneumonia, bronchitis and had other physical symptoms that were left unexplained.

Both girls' schools expected certain behaviors from them if they were to be accepted by society. Nita was expected to read like other students and to write with her right hand instead of her left. Anne was expected to use similarities as the basis of organizing herself; to take less time thinking about what she was going to do, and to be visibly active in expressing herself. Both girls had to restructure themselves to function in their school environments.

Megan's Journey

Background and Personality

Megan is a high school student with green-brown eyes and a lovely smile. When she was younger, there was a look of impish devilment about her and often the far away look of a dreamer. She comes from a well educated family. I found out through these interviews that both parents were English majors and still write. I did not know this when I worked with Megan. Megan's mother is employed as a writer, while Megan's father is working in insurance. He also writes short stories and articles for

publications. Megan has one sister who is a few years older. They are extremely different. Irene always wanted to be the center of society but Megan searched for more meaning in her life and often found life lacking.

I taught Megan during her first three years of school. She was part of a gifted class that met one day a week. When I asked if I could interview her, she agreed to meet with me in her home. The interviews were held at her dining room table.

Earliest Memory of Being Creative

When I asked Megan to tell me about her first memory of being creative she really did not have one specific experience that she could remember to talk about, but after I waited for her to respond she gave this answer:

I remember writing one poem, maybe it was in your class and I remember people saying it was really great and really creative and stuff and, I thought, I really didn't think it was that good and that's pretty much the first!

Since I taught Megan in the first, second and third grades, the poem she is speaking of would have had to have been written during those years.

In the gifted classroom, Megan at six, seven and eight was wrapped in the robes of creative energy. She danced, acted and wrote poetry with total concentration on the act. However, she did not understand some of the simplest mathematical operations unless they were verbally illustrated. She did not center herself in the middle of the group but was perfectly happy relying on her own experiences to bring reality into her life. She preferred to remain on the outer rim of the group. The other students accepted her into the group whenever she wanted to re-enter and allowed her the space she needed to withdraw into herself when she needed to be alone.

Feelings About Being A Creative Person

When asked if she considered herself to be a creative person, Megan replied:

Well, I think maybe creative in that I think about, I seem to think about a lot more things than, I guess, [than] my peers do. I'm always thinking about something. It seems to me like, like issues and things like that mean a lot more to me than others but I don't know, I mean, I don't see it as creativity. Mainly I kind of see it as just being more aware [of] what's going on.

However when asked if she saw herself as a creative person in comparison to her peers she had a different statement to make.

I think everyone is creative in their own way. I mean like with English wise I think I'm that creative person as I tend to think of ways people won't think of, explore things more and say things in a different way. I guess everyone has their own way of being creative. [Long pause] I guess I'm just stronger in a certain area than I am in another. I don't consider myself to be any more special.

She began the journey of self discovery earlier than her peers who -- when she was struggling to find out who she was -- were more interested in what they were going to wear to the prom or what someone said about them. She felt that her friends did not appear to express their feelings about what was morally right or wrong.

Really things matter more to me than, like grades and stuff like that don't matter to me but well they matter but it seems like, I don't know, I would have to. . . . I feel a lot of times frustrated because they [her friends] are so shallow and I can't . . . and their thinking about what they are going to do Saturday night and I'm thinking about whether it's right to do this or not. I guess they don't understand why things like that are so important to me and why it matters to me so much, what happens. . . . Like every little thing that happens, worrying about whether it is morally right or what the results are going to be and I guess I just really think more it seems. Like I'm always really wanting to. . . . I'm pretty much an idealist. I want things to be right and everyone to act right. I mean not act right but things to turn out right and it seems like they don't understand that and don't really care.

When asked what she thinks about now she replied:

Well, I think I worry a lot not about myself, my life, but about the world and the stuff that is going on. I think about why something is going wrong. I think mainly my mind has kind of changed a lot. [Long pause] About stuff like whenever someone will invent a new wonderful thing like a new drug or something. I guess I'm sort of pessimistic in that I think that everything keeps

getting worse because I think that eventually it is just going to end. I think about how industry or whatever in a couple of years have [has] changed. It seems that everything that we do for good, say we invent a cure for the flu that we cause cancer or something [or] like messing with nature, breaking atoms etc. has bad effects somewhere. Even if it seems to have a good effect it seems to always end up bad somewhere. I'm kind of running around in circles aren't I? [Laughter]

It has only been recently that Megan has come to understand that people can be creative in different ways. She used to totally ignore individuals whose forms of expression were mathematical or artistic and completely blocked this out of her awareness. She now views creativity as a way of expressing individual thoughts and feelings:

Umm, people express . . . I think everyone has a need to express what they are feeling but you know, my aunt is an artist and she expresses herself through art and after studying in that humanity course, all that art, it really made me understand and appreciate that. I could never understand that before, why that would be important to people. Art or music but now I understand that they have the same feelings I do. They just get them out in a different way and they could be, you know, someone could express their feelings in some other ways besides the arts that we think of today. They may express it in the way they act or whatever. . . . Just the way that I live expresses the way that I feel and just what I think about.

So when asked what she wanted to become when she finished creating herself she replied that she really was not sure but she knew that she never wanted to finish creating who she was or who she was to become!

I've always been the kind of person who wants to know why for everything. My mom says I use to ask her all these questions when I was younger. Why is the sky blue and now green? I think I'm just kind of, want to know what everything is like so I guess I really don't have a clear picture of myself. I mean I'm too interested in other people to be concentrating on myself, I guess. I don't think I really want to finish creating myself. I mean I think it's great to look back on what I was and what I've become and I think there is always room for a change and I mean, I don't know. I don't want to be trapped into saying I'm this or this, not yet. I mean I do have high morals, I guess you would say and standards. I don't really want to say, 'I'm a person who likes this or that,' just because I don't want to be trapped doing that I guess.

Megan views creativity as a natural state of awareness that grows with the years but she is reluctant to name herself because she wants to continue to create herself. She is uncomfortable being called creative because the concentration that she generates when she writes leaves her confused and at times out of control.

It's not that I'm really scared it's just I don't want to do it [write] anymore because I don't feel like it expresses me well because it, basically, you become someone else. I feel I want to express my feelings more than trying to become someone else.

She expresses it more clearly when discussing insanity and genius.

You can separate the two but I think kind of like Van Gogh was a genius but he was insane and you have to have a certain amount of insanity to be a genius. Most artists or writers are really kind of weird and I think you need to be like that to be good. I think that sometimes creative people to a certain degree need to be that kind of person so they can concentrate on their thing and I think why Van Gogh was such a painter was because he was like that but I don't think I want to be that kind of person. I think I could have been if I had stayed like that. It just depends upon the person that can completely concentrate on their work.

However she still feels that she could initiate the amount of concentration that she experienced in her younger years. The difference is that she would not go around in that state when she was not writing. She feels that she has more balance between her inner language and her external expression of her life.

When I write I think I do but I'm not like that all the time and I might have been sacrificing writing when I act more like a normal person but I think it's worth it not to become that kind of person again. It's kind of embarrasses me when I write because it's a side of me that I don't really like to remember.

School Experiences

Her elementary years were painful and for the most part she blocked out those years from her memory. Our interview reopened flashes of those memories that she has

wanted to put aside and though she wanted to continue talking, the experience was emotionally painful. You could tell by observing the emotion that she put into her words while she was speaking.

I remember being in A. G. I remember like, umm, I always remember writing poems and stuff like that and acting differently than in other years and going off and sitting by myself but I don't remember a lot about it. [Long pause] I've tried to block most of it out. I really did. I don't look too fondly on my elementary school. I think that's really why I've changed a lot in the way that I express myself because I was really worried about what people thought. I knew I was always different and people would, make fun of me because I was different. I would do weird things, you know like go over to the corner and stand there and think and stuff like that. Just weird stuff. I don't know really why but I think I really changed. I'm a lot more secure. It really doesn't matter to me anymore what other people think. It matters what I think!

Within the group of gifted students, she felt comfortable and accepted. Outside of this group, she struggled to find her identity. However, she feels that her elementary years supported her more as a person.

I don't think that school does a good job. I think that in elementary school is when I built my foundations and I think that was good but I don't think that junior high or high school does a good job at all [of] letting people express their creative side. [Long pause] I think elementary school did.

The big change occurred in her life when she was in high school. She attributes the change to discovering Christianity.

Ummm, I've become a Christian and it's changed my mind set. I had a period like last, like a couple of years ago, like I was just thinking about. . . . I took a humanities course and was just thinking about all these different philosophies and stuff like that and I finally came to the conclusion of Christianity, but before that I tried a lot of different philosophies to different stuff like things that happen and, but now I still think about those things but just in different ways, I think and I think that's maybe why I don't worry as much about making up things that aren't real, like imagining something happening. It's more real to characterize a real person and understand how that person really is instead of making up something.

Her comparison of herself before and after Christianity is interesting. This is what she said.

Well, I guess I've always thought I was a Christian. Ummm, before that but I would always think what if it were, what if there was another world with people like us and just weird stuff like that and all different kinds of stuff and I don't feel like I need to imagine stuff that isn't there anymore. I think it's a lot more interesting to really find out what life is really like and go from there I guess.

Megan views her high school years as being worthless for a number of reasons. She feels that the school does not acknowledge the natural way that she expresses herself nor does it take into account the way she processes information. After each session in class she has to take the material home and interpret the information in a way that makes sense to her. In general, she feels that some teachers are only interested in teaching the mechanics of their craft and do not know what to do with the students that are already beyond the mechanics -- of writing, for instance. She is too frequently required to do homework based on other students' errors rather than allowed to work on her own writing which is further advanced than that of her classmates. She feels that there is not the time needed to truly discuss good literature or to delve deeply into the creative interpretation. Creative courses are viewed as "crib" courses. Also, she feels that unnecessary demands are placed on students. For instance she does not need to write an outline or a rough draft to write. She has her own method of organization which occurs in her head. When she is ready to write she just writes! She feels it is a waste of time to write everything down when she could accomplish the same act quicker in her head.

I don't write rough drafts, outlines or anything. It makes people kind of mad because they'll spend weeks on an essay and I'll just write it and get the same grade.

She feels that it would have been easier for her if she is given her assignments all at once at the beginning of the day and then allowed to go home. Then, on the next day, she would like classroom discussions and talking things out with her teachers and peers.

Creative Forms of Expressions

During her elementary years, Megan had a vivid imagination that allowed her to travel to other worlds and explore the possibility of life on other planets. She wrote about imaginary trips to Mars and aliens landing on planet earth. She wrote about the marvels of nature and the wonder of life. She also wrote about New York City with peoples' eyes turned upward because of the tall buildings and what the world would look like if people had to always look up. Now as she experiences changes in herself, there comes a change in her writing.

I don't use my imagination anymore. I really like to categorize the way they [people] are. I remember I used to think of things that would happen that weren't really, you know, just weird things but now it basically, it's trying to express how a person is exactly and convey through my words exactly how a person is. [Long pause] I'll remember incidents and the way exactly someone acts and exactly the kind of way that they move that they make, whatever. Ummmm I'll try to remember exactly what a person is like and how they would react to it.

Though Megan says she does not use her imagination anymore, she acknowledges that she still visualizes. In math she mentally pictures what is happening to X, two and three. She says she has to picture what X is going to be in order to understand what she is doing. In writing, when she thinks about a person, she will picture that person in her mind in many different situations trying to figure out how to express the visualization later into words. She says she thinks in blocks of pictures. Usually when she writes a poem it turns into something else. She says, "It just weaves into something." She will then have to go back and write another poem on the topic she was assigned. She also acknowledges daydreaming.

I'll picture things as they were like things that I've seen before and imagine things but then again there is a fine line between that and hallucination. I'll daydream in class and stuff but I don't know, where can you say, this is hallucination and this is daydreaming.

Even though she is now uncomfortable with using her imagination, she accepts daydreaming as a natural part of herself and does not even realize when she is doing it.

It's just like it's a normal thing for me and then I'll look at a clock and realize I'll be sitting there daydreaming the whole period and I never even realized when I started it! It's kind of a natural thing and I have to work really hard to keep from doing that.

The method Megan will use to express herself has not developed into a set form, but she has a deep desire to make a difference for having lived and a deeper desire to be happy with herself. She still enjoys music, peer counseling, cheerleading, and sometimes expressing herself through her poetry. She has a deep concern for the homeless, the elderly and for children from broken homes. However, she repeatedly says the statement she has to make is to herself.

Well, not in the way that I would make the statement to other people but just kind of making a statement to myself! I really don't think it matters to me that much whether other people know who Megan is, [or if] I did something in the world! If I know myself that I've done something, that's what is really important to me.

Right now she loves her life and the choices that she has made for herself. She would not want to be anyone else. This is a change from her younger years. During her younger years she wanted to be someone else, but she had trouble relating to other people and was not satisfied with her life. Even though she may have put a hold on her creative life, she says it's because she does not have the time to be as creative as she use to be. It's a choice she has made and she is happy with it at this time.

Blocks to Creativity

What makes life extremely difficult is that the ease and beauty with which she expresses herself through writing has not been recognized by her parents as being unique. As she says,

I've always been expected to be that because my parents write. . . . It's always been kind of like, well, you are in this family, you don't like math, so you write! So, I've always been expected to write.

She remembers not having the support she needed at home to move her talent to a deeper level and was often disappointed in the actions of her parents who appreciated her work but did not accept it as a serious accomplishment. She remembers when she was ten years old and she wanted to write a novel.

It was really frustrating because I wanted to write a novel when I was ten years old and all that kind of stuff and it frustrated me that my parents would say, 'Well, you can't do that yet. You have to go through school and find out how to write.' But well, I can write! I didn't realize that I couldn't.

Thus, she felt she was not recognized by her family for that part of her that was unique.

I think they have always known I can write. They just assumed I could write and things like that which isn't really great. . . . I mean it's frustrating as that was my only outlet and I really wanted to make that just absolutely great!

She slowly stopped writing for other people and now only writes for class or for herself.

Her desire to "write for a living" has diminished:

I kinda realize that I really, I don't know why but I don't really like other people to read what I write because, ummm, I think I really write for myself mainly because I didn't really want to show it to my mom. She convinced me to show it to her. She took it to work and showed it to some woman at her work and it really made me mad. I don't know, I think it's kind of a different side of me and I feel like, when people don't know me, I don't want them to see that side, I guess. . . . I think I was frustrated because that was my only outlet and stuff and I thought it was interesting because I studied Van Gogh for a term paper and he said art was

the only way he could express himself and he didn't say that because it was his only thing and I think it's better now that I don't need that as much anymore.

Megan wanted parent approval, but did not feel comfortable with her mother sharing her private thoughts outside of the home with strangers.

Nita's Journey - Part III: Nita As A High School Student

Background and Personality

Nita as a high school student had the look of a dreamer. She was still shy of people and preferred having one or two friends rather than being included in the many cliques that develop during high school years, but she was happier than she had been during her junior high years. She feels that much of this mood had to do with the Panamanian environment in which she was living. The climate was warm and the profusion of animal and plant life gave her the visual stimulus that she needed to feel happy. Because of the heat people moved at a slower pace.

Also, her parents were more settled in their roles so there was less tension in the home. Her father was to begin to take an active part in her mental and emotional well-being by including her in his many activities. He worked as a civil service servant for the Panama Canal Company, but he was often released from his job to free lance for the Armed Services because of his knowledge of the jungle and its people. He was able to take people unfamiliar with the area or its people into restricted areas. It was through this work that the family home became a way station for people from universities, churches or from the armed services who wanted to enter uncharted territories to study the animal life or the people. Much of Nita's time was spent exploring with her father or with a small group of friends that she met at school.

Feelings About Being a Creative Person

During her high school years, Nita began to become more aware of the people in her environment. Nita's father collected people from all walks of life. People from the

university wanted to know this man whom students were talking about. Government officials, travelers through the country, missionaries, photographers from National Geographic and Indians that he met exploring the jungles were just a few that graced the family table.

It was with the Choo Cho Indians, however, that he developed a close friendship. They were to become part of Nita's experience as long as she was to remain in Panama. Through her father's association with this tribe, she was able to understand the primitive mind and the way these people lived. The very slow process involved in a gifted chief's struggle to bring his people into civilization was to become part of Nita's experience. She was able to observe the humility and sincerity of these people as they interacted with her family. The diverse groups of people that passed through her home were bound to have some impact on her knowledge and acceptance of people from diversified backgrounds.

Our home would have been a beautiful case study for some one interested in studying the integration of different cultures because my father was very prejudiced and yet he was also a humanitarian and would run to the rescue of anyone needing help. What he said about other cultures and how he acted towards them were entirely different. We, my brother and sisters and I, often found ourselves defending the people he enjoyed criticizing while he continued helping them without taking away their dignity. He had a huge heart that could truly not bear to see any living thing suffer. When he had to bring someone to the hospital who was injured on the job, the hospital authorities knew that they would need two stretchers . . . one stretcher for the injured party and the other for my father. He would help, but he was also very likely to faint. We both have a deep sensitivity to the suffering that surrounds us. For me the pain of others would actually reproduce itself as physical pain within my own body.

Nita's home was a way station for people and animals alike and both were often allowed to stay until they could move out on their own. The lost, hurt and curious were welcomed into her home to heal and were always accepted. They left stronger than when they first appeared.

With the influx of people in my life I had to be able to relate to a diversity of personalities. You could say I became a people watcher. I would observe how similar or different people were from what they were saying or what they were projecting. You could say I was perfecting my skill of 'reading people.' I became very good at knowing how to behave with different groups of people but I was especially interested in observing the Indians. I felt I was a lot like them. Their attempt at interpreting the modern world around them resembled my own efforts. Also, I felt I had the same kind of raw energy in me that could easily explode if I wasn't careful.

Nita could not address her own personal feelings about being creative in high school. Instead she said the following.

While all these people were entering my life, I was not aware of myself as a creative person, but I was aware of my growing understanding of the emotions of the people that were surrounding me. It was their feelings of emotion and expression that I was interested in and not my own. My singing and the participation in sports during high school was just something I had to do, but if it was left entirely up to me, I probably wouldn't have had the strength to appear in the lime light without either my father or my teachers pushing me to participate. Each participation took its toll on my physical body.

For instance, she explained that after a basketball game her legs would become paralyzed and she would have to be carried off the playing court. Or after singing she would not be aware of where she was and would have to have someone prompt her into the next action.

Creative Forms of Expression

During these years, Nita was known for her quiet manner and her lovely singing voice. About the only time she could get in front of a group without crying was when she was singing. *Even then she preferred to be an observer or a listener.*

I had to observe to know how to act. I had to be cautious if I was going to be accepted and during these years I wanted to be accepted by my peers. At the same time I had to honor my limitations because if I didn't, I couldn't control my responses.

For instance, one drink and I completely lost control of myself, I was like someone overdosed with a hallucinogenic drug. I spent my high school years learning how to act in society by testing my own mental and emotional boundaries. Another example would be my sensitivity to feeling the emotion that was around me. If my friend had a headache, I had a headache. If the symptoms

were worse, I also experienced those. That's why I needed time away from people. I needed to be in nature to heal because I didn't know how not to take in everything around me. I wasn't to learn how to do this until later in my life.

While the outer world began to gain more of Nita's attention, the inner world was quietly strengthened by her exploration of the primitive land in which she lived.

Panama was rich with unexplored territory and Nita's father opened this new world for her. On the pretext of exploring, they would take long trips into the jungle searching for different plants and animals to observe. They would sit and absorb the beauty that surrounded them and expand their inner visioning until a moving panoramic view would appear in their minds. For instance, she would watch an Indian chase a deer along a stream or watch a toucan or listen to the sounds created by the creatures in the jungles. She and her father would sit for hours and observe and feel the sounds that were around them.

Nita's skills were used for her enjoyment but she could also visualize the animals that they were to see and point out where they could be found. Occasionally they would bring home an iguana to eat, but most of the time was spent in a relaxed state experiencing the surrounding environment.

I remember traveling close to the Columbian border with my father and seeing a black panther for the first time. It paused and stared us in the eyes and then continued to cross our path to disappear into the deep underbrush. It wasn't something you talked about. Instead it left you speechless with a feeling of awe or wonderment that you were able to share that moment in time with another living creature. These were creative sharings because they pushed my boundaries of feeling with a need to express with words what I was experiencing, but there were no words!

Daydreaming was a natural part of Nita's life but she can also remember using her mind to photograph the natural surroundings.

During rainy season in the tropics, the profusion of color was intoxicating. The colors of the flowers were more brilliant. The greenery felt like it was vivid and alive. The scenery reflected this brilliance in framed paintings projected by my natural sight. I would practice holding one of these images on my inner camera until I could reproduce it at will by simply thinking about it -- not only the visual image but also the feelings and sounds that the natural scene held in its original sighting. I would then use my imagination and recreate these scenes in many different ways. Sometimes the images would have a life of their own and I would watch the movie screen in my mind create its own stories. I enjoyed amusing myself in this manner. It is also what probably gave me the look of a dreamer. I would become so absorbed in my inner thoughts that it would give me a dazed look as I viewed my thoughts with my eyes opened.

Nita wanted to share what she saw and felt but the words were not enough. She thought that if she could project the feelings and emotions brought on by the beauty that she experienced, she could come closer to sharing the experience, but the techniques for doing this were unknown to her.

The intoxicating beauty of these trips stayed imprinted in her memory and were partially recorded in her personal journals as pictures and symbols with an occasional word or phrase. Nita's inner awareness of her environment grew right along with her outer awareness, but the colors that she saw around people began to recede into her inner vision. It became easier to function in the physical world if she moved these colors to the back of her head and this is what she eventually did.

The shift from the inner world to the outer world continued as her outer awareness of her environment began to demand more of her attention, but it was difficult to say which kind of awareness was strengthened more. Nita's shift from the inner world to the world around her was becoming more balanced. Both her inner monologue and her outer dialogue appeared to be nurtured.

School Experiences

On the intellectual level, the difficulty to learn continued throughout high school because Nita was denied her own natural way of learning. She had difficulty with all of her classes except music and was advised repeatedly not to attend college. However, her

father said, "She will go to college," and "She will take college level classes." She could intuit any answer she needed to know, but she could not tell you how that information came to her. It was natural for her to bring information to a conscious level and then have to search the library for a source or spend hours with someone trying to explain to her the logical steps needed to obtain the answer she already had.

The need that her teachers had to have her justify every answer did not let her develop in her own natural way. Her way of knowing, bringing thought from her inner monologue to the external level, was discouraged in school and she began to doubt this natural way of knowing. Only her singing and participation in sports were accepted. She tried to reprogram her method of learning to fit the demands of her teachers.

I still think that if I could have had more time to work things out by myself I could have given them the steps that they wanted, only it would have taken me longer. I had to go backwards, beginning with my answers and recording the symbols that I saw and then waiting for them to have external meaning. The steps in their raw form wouldn't have made any sense to anyone until they were processed by me. No one wanted to wait long enough for this to occur. My teachers saw only what they could see and, as far as they were concerned, what they saw didn't make sense. The more impatient they became, the less confidence I had in myself. At this point I would have given them what they wanted, but I didn't know the written symbols for my thoughts.

Sometimes it would have been better for her to get her assignments and not even attend class, except for one fact. Something happened when the teacher spoke. On some level Nita was understanding. It may not have been the spoken word, but there definitely was an exchange of imaginary occurring. Nita would go home after class and place herself in a relaxed frame of mind and write everything that came into her mind. At times the disjointed scribbles did not seem related because the information did not come out in sentences but in symbols, sounds, colors, emotions, pictures and sometimes phrases, but this process -- which was to continue throughout her life -- eventually brought understanding to the spoken and written word.

It also opened up to Nita a new way of processing information. By the end of her high school years her drawers were full of tapes, notes and thoughts about the subjects she had taken. She also found that by talking she could access more information, so she formed study groups that would meet at her home to discuss the topics on which she was currently working.

It was not long before her father became an important part of the interaction that was occurring in the learning process. He would create open ended problems on which the whole family would work. It was not unusual to see the house full of students gathered around her father as he held them captive trying to solve a mathematical problem, a history problem, a physics problem etc. Learning became a challenge, and when he threw down the gauntlet, there was always someone there to pick up the challenge. Nita's father could intuit any answer, but what Nita and her friends learned later was that he did not always have the necessary steps to explain his answers either. He would entice them to do his leg work. Nita inherited his curiosity and love for problem solving.

Nita's school environment may not have nurtured her intellectual development, but her home environment created a beautiful learning environment and within its wall she was nurtured and allowed to use her intuitive ability. Even though she was still advised repeatedly not to take the college bound courses, a few teachers took a personal interest in her development and worked closely with her.

One of my English teachers let me work as his assistant. I started out by searching for certain types of errors in writing assignments and giving my opinion on the paper. We developed a mentor relationship. I was able to ask all the questions I wanted to ask and, by experiencing other students' work, I taught myself more of the written English language.

Blocks to Creativity

Time limits and having to recall information within someone else's time frame always gave Nita's problems. Whether it was when she was expressing herself creatively or taking tests in a classroom, she felt time limit restrictions.

If I was in a classroom surrounded by other students, I would get a barrage of pictures and thoughts from the students that surrounded me. I couldn't distinguish the boundaries of my thoughts from the thoughts of those surrounding me. Even today I can't go to the mall or join a large group of people if I am tired without being bombarded by pictures and thoughts. In order to take a test I would have to relax my mind to process my own thoughts but in the classroom, by the time I've quieted myself sufficiently, the time seemed to have just disappeared.

Her answers were never the answers required on the test and her mind would go blank when faced with a time limit. To this day she cannot take a timed test that would show her true ability. She feels that questions are to be tasted like a good wine, allowed to sit on the palate until sensed and slowly swallowed in order to understand the total implication of what is being tasted or asked.

Very much like I became the dance or the music during my younger years, if someone asked me a question then I became the question. My whole being would swim with the possibilities of interpretations until the whole focus of the question would be lost. If they were essay questions, it would even be worse. I might answer one question out of five and still not be finished to my satisfaction. The written expression never matched my inner thoughts. Also, I wrote using a combination of Polish, English, or Spanish grammar . . . whichever came first -- and I spoke the same way! My spelling was also a combination of these languages. I caused quite a stir among my teachers. My Spanish teacher said to me when I graduated from his class, 'You gave a whole new interpretation to the Spanish language. I have never been so happy to see someone graduate as I am you, Senorita Nita!'

Nita's thoughts did not connect or interrelate the same way as other people's did. Her mind saw the unusual, the contrasts and the what ifs and there was never endings or conclusions, just resting places along the way to the new questions and the next answers.

Frequently I would find myself with a wealth of information that I did not understand on the verbal level but made perfect sense in my picture mind. One teacher that I had was more open to these outbursts of information and tried to ease the tension between the need to receive a good grade and the need to share what I verbally did not understand, but felt I knew. I remember her placing $2+2=4$ on the board and asking if this was correct. No one answered and she let us sit there without saying anything until the silence became very thick . . . about thirty minutes. This gave me ample opportunity to process it in my mind. I received a whole battery of equations that I did not understand. My curiosity was well peaked by this time so I answered. 'No!' This got her attention and she asked me to explain. I couldn't explain but I said I could write it on the board and I did. She didn't accuse me of cheating as some other teachers had but said, 'If you can do this why are you having so much trouble in my class?' After this experience she said, 'I'll give you an A or a B if you commit to working with me privately.' She did this for me and others in her class whom she felt she could help.

The flood of images were real for Nita but she needed time to filter through them. As was often the case, it was many years later when reading a book by R. Buckminster Fuller that she fully understood what the equations on the board meant. She had to still the mind in order to focus and then she had to really trust that the information she received was accurate. She also had to believe that the questioners really were asking the questions that they appeared to be asking.

Nita was reminded of herself when, as an adult, she was giving an aptitude test to a gifted student.

I made the statement, 'Milk is white,' and the student was to respond true or false. The answer was true, but the youngster said false. He was very troubled over his answer and asked, 'When do you want to know this answer?' I said, 'Now.' So he said it had to be false because in his desk he had his lunchbox and in it was a thermos of chocolate milk. He went on to tell me that sometimes he had strawberry milk and at other times he had banana milk so he thought it was a stupid question. I often felt the confusion that this child must have felt.

Nita felt from the standpoint of where she was coming from that many of the questions that were asked were ambiguous or demanded a predetermined answer.

I felt that everyone had a predetermined answer to the questions that they were asking and no one took into consideration other possibilities. I can remember myself being asked about the seasons of the year and saying rainy season and dry

or being asked what direction did the sun set and in my mind seeing it set in different directions so I asked the teacher, 'When?' and she accused me of being rude, not realizing that at different times in history the sun did in fact rise and set in different directions.

Patterns in the Lives of Megan and Nita

The personalities of Megan and Nita were similar. They were both shy and had a tendency to focus inwardly through their early years but Nita was placed repeatedly into roles to overcome this shyness by having to perform in front of different audiences. Megan on the other hand was drawn towards writing during her younger years and withdrew from her environment to write. During high school both girls were to concentrate more on the external world around them.

Megan's family was well established in their community. Megan was expected to fulfill the roles placed upon her by that community. They were familiar roles that were taught in her home, school and surrounding institutions. Her family were upper middle class people with high expectations for their children and they reinforced those values in their home.

Nita, on the other hand had moved out of what was a comfortable New England, Polish culture to live in a Spanish-American environment where the rules and customs of the people she was to associate with came from backgrounds ranging from the very primitive to the very socially elite economic structure. To complicate matters, she still did not have a comfortable understanding of the English language. She had just begun to make the transition from Polish to English. With the customs and language unknown to her she tried once again to resume her role as observer in order to cope with the many changes. She was to learn during her high school years how to balance her role as inner and outer observer with the role of taking an active role in society.

Megan and Nita did not have distinct early memories of being creative but they did recognize themselves as being creative. Megan remembers pulling away to be by herself

to write and to do "weird things" like thinking. Nita remembers singing and dancing as two ways of expressing herself. What separated the two girls from their peers was the intensity in which these acts were accomplished. They completely lost themselves in the acts they were performing. Megan recognized this as acting differently when writing and was uncomfortable with the behaviors that she exhibited. She was more comfortable cheerleading. By the time Megan reached high school, she only wrote for herself. Nita did not express herself in this manner. She just knew that she forgot about herself whenever she was singing or participating in sports. Because of her shyness, she would have preferred not to perform, but once she was singing her fears were forgotten.

Megan wanted to forget her elementary years because she found it too painful to remember the way she used to act. By the time she reached high school the outside pulls were strong enough to make her want to center her awareness more on what was happening around her. A change in religious beliefs facilitated Megan's switch from inner awareness to focus more and more on her outward awareness. There was need to describe and explain the reality that she saw around her. As this need grew stronger, she completely shifted her focus from the inner world to the external world of real people that surrounded her. They became more important to her than her own inner reality.

Like Megan, daydreaming was a natural part of Nita's life. Both felt that it was natural and important for them to daydream. Megan described it as a natural process that she used quite frequently, but when her change in religious beliefs brought a different focus to her awareness, she did not see the value of her inner world and she denied herself the use of her imagination. She felt that she did not need to use her imagination to have a happy life. She wanted to be more in control of her life. She did not feel that she had this control when her imagination would present a thought or story

of its own. She felt uncomfortable when her imagination would take over and create something totally different from that which she had started thinking about. The only way she could deal with it was not to use the imagination at all. In this way she felt she had more control over her life.

Nita's growth in expressing her external world developed differently. She showed more balance when developing her internal thoughts than in striving for an external expression. She used her inner camera to photograph the beauty that surrounded her and to recreate the scenes to search for animals to observe. She would sit for long periods of time and observe nature and listen to the sounds around her. The observations, sounds and contact with wild animals were all stored in her mind to be recreated in her imagination and played over and over again in different scenarios. She found pleasure in interacting with her imagination and had many opportunities to practice using it. She could not share these scenarios in writing as Megan could, but she did store them, along with all the emotions, in her inner pictorial memory. She also stored them in journals. Her journals were filled with pictures, symbols and an occasional word or phrase but they were for her understanding only. They did not have the polished quality that Megan's written expression has.

Both girls found school difficult because their methods of processing information were different from what was being presented to them. They processed information in their inner thoughts -- first in pictures and symbols -- before expressing them in written form. Many times the written words were not available to them when they needed them. Megan described herself as needing more time to discuss her course work intellectually with her peers and professors. Megan said she sometimes felt it would have been better for her to get her assignments and not even attend class. She felt that

her teachers did not know what to do with students that already knew a subject. She also felt they were able to teach only the mechanics of their subjects.

Nita, on the other hand, needed to be present at the lectures so that she could then go home and transcribe what was said into her own language for further understanding. She did not have the knowledge of the mechanics of writing and had to experience the writing of others before she felt comfortable expressing herself in written form. She knew she needed to listen to her teachers, but she did not know why.

Nita also recognized her need to talk about what she was learning. Unlike Megan, she created her own study groups in her home -- groups in which her whole family was to play a part. Nita received the added support of her father who acted as her mentor. Her father and mother attended all of her musical functions and encouraged her to use their home as a place to stimulate her thought processes and intellectual curiosity.

Megan's parents' expectations were different. They expected her to write because they wrote and did not see anything unique about her writing. They were proud of her writing and showed it to friends and relatives but that was not the kind of support Megan felt she needed. Megan wanted them to acknowledge her writing as being unique and wanted their encouragement to write the novel she wanted to write. Instead they insisted that she needed to learn more about her craft. She was not taken seriously. Without their support her desire to be great started to diminish.

The girls shared other similarities in high school too. They were very active in school activities and developed more confidence in themselves as they focused on their outside activities. Nita felt that the natural environment contributed a great deal to her growth and self-confidence while Megan felt her growth was a result of her no longer relying on her imagination; she looked more closely at what was real around her. The

difficulty to learn continued throughout high school because like Megan, Nita was denying her own natural way of learning.

Liza's Journey

Background and Personality

I first met Liza through her brother, Bob. Bob entered the gifted program in the first grade and Liza was a few years ahead of him in the gifted program, but with a different teacher. That year I was teaching the first, second and third grade students who had qualified for these additional services offered beyond the regular classroom. This particular year was to be the most enjoyable of my teaching career. Every now and then a special group of students appears with unique qualities. This was such a group. The group had creativity, brilliance, intensity, diversity, commitment, curiosity and it was ready to be challenged in both group and individual endeavors. My role fluctuated between being the facilitator and being ring master of the group.

Liza was in the fourth, fifth and sixth grade class but she entered into many of the activities that were assigned to Bob because her curious mind could not ignore a challenge. Bob, according to Liza, was not as creative as she. In fact, she felt he was the exact opposite because he would reduce the most creative act to a conglomeration of facts and figures which would completely infuriate his sister. She did not feel that this was creative expression.

It was not long into the year before the teacher who was teaching the fourth, fifth and sixth grade gifted class and I decided that maybe it would benefit both groups if we were to merge them and work on specific units of study together. This is what we did. For two years I was able to observe Liza and work directly and indirectly with her. The information for this study comes from these early observations and through interviews

held with her in my home when, as a young adult, she was home for summer break from college. Liza addressed each question fluently and vivaciously.

From the beginning Liza stood out among her peers as being different. She was more verbal, more imaginative, more volatile and more dramatic than any of her gifted classmates. She also dressed differently from the rest of the students in her class even though she came from the same socio-economic background. The statement she tried to make with her dress was, "Here I am, Liza, the writer." She was the older of two children. Both parents were well educated. Liza's mother went back to school to receive her college degree in communication after her divorce. Liza and her brother lived with their mother and occasionally visited their father and his new family.

Earliest Memory of Being Creative

Her first memory of being recognized as a creative person happened in the first grade. She said she went to school reading but the teacher placed her in the bottom reading group because she said Liza did not know why she could read. She just knew the words. What the teacher meant was that Liza could not sound out the words like the other students. The teacher did admit that Liza's comprehension was good. Liza felt there was only so much one could comprehend from "peek, pick, and pack." She found it very boring. In retaliation, when asked to write a poem with the form, "What did the bees do? Make honey," she wrote an obscene poem, placed it on the teacher's desk and waited in the corner to see what her reaction would be. The poem went something like this:

What does the mice do?
Bring home cheese.
What does the cat do?
Start to tease.
What does the mice do?
Run, run, run.

What does the cat do?
Spit, spit, spit.

What do the mice do?
Say, "Oh, shit!"

When the teacher read it she started laughing, but she made Liza change the last word to "fiddlesticks" which upset Liza even further because as she said, it did not rhyme and it ruined the meter. Even at that age she knew that you could not "mess up" the meter! By seven she had written her first book. She stapled a bunch of papers together and wrote the stories and drew the pictures.

Feelings About Being a Creative Person

She said that she does not know how an artist or musician perceives their worlds. She does not know whether a painter looks at the world and sees colors, lines and shapes, but when she walks in her world she is always recording. She is thinking, "Gee, wouldn't this be neat to put in a story," and she tends to withdraw and become a recorder more when she is under a great deal of stress.

It's like my brain will shift into a third person mode and I'll start seeing the incident not as it really is happening but in a diluted sort of way. It's just what if this were a story. It's just looking for a word that no one else has thought of or to describe a certain thing.

She suspects that the way she views her world is different, but she cannot be certain, because she does not know what other peoples' worlds are like.

I somehow suspect that it is different. Maybe I just feel things on different levels or experience things on a different level. Not necessarily better or worse at all. Just, just maybe deeper or in a different place or process things differently. Or, maybe that's just me being neurotic. [Laughter] A lot of times I can't figure out what part of me is creative or what part of me is just neurotic. Maybe because I know I am both. [Laughter]

When asked to describe her world, she speaks of noticing trash lying around and classifying everything that is different. Usually she will even categorize it as if she

were going to save it for a section of one of her stories. She mentions loving her home city because of the contrasts that she sees whenever she goes downtown.

Looking at the painting or the art work or the graffiti on the buildings and how the bricks are and I pay attention to architecture when I walk down the street. . . Architecture fifty years apart standing next to each other [pause] this one is really art deco and this one with the guard rails on top and I notice that kind of juxtaposition because that's the kind of thing I like to put in my story. How things clash like that and I can get really depressed about everything that is going on in the world. I am capable of being completely guilty of any world crisis. I don't have much patience with people in general, I don't think 'cause I always, maybe I expect more of people than I should. Mmm, so I often get frustrated having to deal with people. . . . I don't need a lot of people in my life but I'm not the kind of person who wants to be surrounded by people constantly and who needs constant reinforcement by a large crowd. . . . I get frustrated by routine. What seems to be really mundane and unnecessary, like high school. That was a miserable time.

She sees herself as apart from society -- not really fitting into the main stream but at times trying to fit in and finding herself to be a dismal failure until finally giving up and saying, "I'm going to do what I want to do."

I really see my world just as sort of going on and me not really fitting in anywhere in it. I see myself almost as an observer a lot of times. Someone who is just watching what is going on and me not taking part in a whole lot of it. It's different in college. I found a really good college where everyone else has gone through their high school days feeling exactly the same way. I wasn't as neurotic as I thought.

Her perception of how people view her is that they do not take her seriously many times because of her small stature and flip attitude about almost everything.

I feel like there is a real dichotomy depending on the context that they know me. They would either see me as some kind of fruit, a little flakey, hippy walking around with big red hair or as a high powered English 'geck,' and only if they know me as a person will the two sides go together and they know it's a little bit of both.

When asked what her interpretation of being creative means she shared the following:

. . .well I think about this a lot but I never had a chance to verbalize it before. As far as I'm concerned creativity, it's being able to create something, to cheat and use the word create the root word, to be able to come up with something else that is yours that no one else has thought of before. That's what I like about writing because if I write about a story I get to play God and move all these little characters around, invent people, invent worlds where I've written one or two science fiction stories that I have written. You can do anything you want and I guess creativity would be necessary to create a whole person or family or interrelationships between people because I've done a lot of short stories through two years inventing every possible relationships that these five characters can have. So you are creating people. It's like playing Doctor Frankenstein.

Q: When you are most creative what does it feel like?

Oh! It's goooooood! There is a feeling in your stomach. I guess it's like hang gliding. It's like you are just sailing out of control and at the same time you are really in control? Because you're knowing exactly what is going to happen with your characters. You've manipulated them but at the same time they are their own personalities and have their own lives dictating what they are going to do.

She feels that creative people are more flexible in their thinking. They tend to look for more solutions to problems and want to know more about the surrounding options. She describes it as wanting to get "inside" the problem just as she tries to get inside the heads of the characters that she writes about. She recognizes other creative people by talking to them and seeing the way their minds work or in seeing a product of theirs, like a writing or art work. She feels that creative people have very unique ways of expressing themselves.

I've always just identified creativity as the major part of my personality rather than any other part of my personality influencing this total separate entity of creativity I've always just . . . you know, in all the little autobiographical things I've had to do creative? It was probably the first thing I put on the list. I've always just considered it a part of myself.

She describes the link between insanity and creativity as the frustration of not being able to verbalize or write her thoughts to depict the original emotion that she had. She gives the example of a science fiction writer who writes about an artist that paints

the landscapes of fairies and if he does not paint them his eyes hurt. He ends up putting his eyes out with his paint brush because he could not stop seeing the visions of another artist and he could not tolerate the pain.

That just reminded me of a link that a lot of people perceive between creativity and just being crazy. 'Cause maybe when you are creative you see things that other people don't see! Maybe not in a little way like that but maybe just perceives things, feeling things. So I think maybe that writers who are alcoholic or painters who kill themselves or cut off their ears or things like that just have a vision that they are trying so hard to get out of themselves through their work, through writing or drowning it with liquor or whatever, will do anything they can do to get it out of themselves. It either becomes productive in a way that they write it down and other people can read it or it becomes self destructive.

Liza says she would go crazy if she went for long periods without writing. She gets a feeling and goes along with the feeling until it forms itself and she is driven to write about it.

There is something inside me that wants to get out and the only way it can get out is if I write it and I don't know why that is . . . it's like I've got to write a story and I'll go along with this feeling for a month before I actually get an idea. It's a horrible feeling. It's like. . . . It's like when you've got to crack your knee or your elbow and it won't do it. [Laughter] That's what it's like it is!

When asked what part her imagination plays in her creative experiences Liza said that imagination and creativity really have different connotations for her.

Imagination and creativity really have different connotations. If you think of imagination you think of dragons. If you think of creativity you think of one hundred things to do with a paper bag. Imagination and creativity, I guess, creativity envisions the world and imagination populates it! [Laughter] . . . Like creative process, imagination, I would apply more specific things like what does this character say because you have imagined that. Creativity has more of a connotation of creating in a larger scale. Like if I was writing a story in ancient Egypt in a pharaoh's tomb . . . that would be creative. The creative part would be creating this world and imagination comes into play, totally when one has never, ever done this before. Creativity is more like envisioning a situation that could happen. It hasn't happened. People don't exist but they could and imagination helps, kicks in, and helps put words in their mouths, moves their little arms and legs.

School Experience

Even during her elementary years, Liza acted the part of a writer. Words fascinated her. She won the *Reflections* contest in the second grade and then once again during her elementary years. By age eight she had written her first novel and had five other novels in some state of revision. Many times she would start writing something and get so involved with the revisions that she would never finish it because she would become bored with it. When she was nine she wrote another novel that took her a year and a half to finish. She says this is the shortest period of time that it has taken her to write a novel. She would usually work on them for an average of two years. One of them was a science fiction novel in which she went deeply into character development.

When I worked with Liza in the elementary grades, she either fully entered into an activity or not at all. Once I assigned a homework project in which the students had to set up a science experiment using the processes they had learned in class and then reporting all of their findings to the class. Liza and her brother, Bob, did the same experiment. Their topic was, "Are plants affected by their environment?" They placed Bob's plant in one room and Liza's plant in another room. One plant, Liza's, would be yelled at daily and the other plant would be talked to gently. It was not long before Liza's plant died and Bob's plant continued to flourish. Even though they expected something like this to happen, a verbal battle resulted that could have collapsed the school building. *One battle after another resulted from lack of understanding one another's language.* What appeared to be a very logical mind and a very creative mind were struggling to understand one another.

We do not understand each other most of the time. We operate on completely different wave lengths. We intersect at times but most of the time we are running parallel in opposite directions. He hates to read. He won't read anything I've written. He's never read one of my stories because he says, 'I wouldn't get it.'

In fact this was typical of the total group of students that composed Liza's gifted classroom; part of the group was very analytical and the other part was very creative. Getting these two groups to develop a language to communicate with one another was what made the group so interesting. With their struggle to find a language in which to communicate, they were able to explore languaging. It took every ounce of our skills as teachers to take advantage of the opportunities that presented themselves through the students' interactions. We also had to remember to provide coping skills that could be used outside of the classroom environment. The students' individual methods of coping brought forth the same intensity outside that they experienced in the classroom. Liza states in her interview that during her elementary years she was striking out at the world -- her parents, teachers, and peers.

Throughout the elementary years she continued developing her craft and fought diligently for her independence to do only what she wanted to do. She would carry around a clipboard and write down conversations that she overheard or expressions that she would then mimic to her classmates and teachers. People either loved her or hated her. She used her gift of words as quickly as sword whips and wondered why people did not like her. Many times I felt she was mimicking not only the words, but the emotion that went along with the words, for the pure enjoyment of the experience. She was in love with the experience. Then when she looked around her, she would be astonished that everyone else was not as impressed with the same experience.

She also became very aware of the gender roles imposed upon her by society. Even at four she remembers giving her brother her dolls and saying, "Here, you need to play with these and you'll be a good father!". And, the underlying message given by her father was that she could not do anything unless her father sent a check. These feelings of frustration continued to fester into her high school years.

The more aware of the world she became, the more she felt she had to do something about it in her writing; but during her elementary years she was perfectly content to write about *Dungeons and Dragons* or the characters that she created. These were the people that were real to her, not those that were in her close environment. It was not until high school that she began periodically to concentrate on the people around her. For example she attended a writing workshop at the University of Virginia and worked strongly on character development.

By the time she entered high school she became even more aware of social differences. She said she did not fit in with the brains and the studiers because she felt that there was more to her life than just studying. She had her writing and she felt that many of her classmates had no creative instincts at all. She could not become part of the athletic group because she was not athletic. She could not hang out with the "rednecks" because she was not one of them. So she ended up hanging out with the drama club, as she describes them, "with the other dregs of society." She felt lost in the school system.

In senior high I really started being conscious of what a discriminatory elitist system it is and I got really frustrated, really angry about it. You can't do anything about it! . . . You feel kind of lost in the system. . . . I didn't have much patience with it at all because there was just so much emphasis on conforming and any kind of individual instinct they work as hard as they could to change, you know, and probably not even realizing it. It's like you go in, they put you in a tuna can and molded you all in the same shape and you come out in the same shape. Then, they reject you!

Upon graduating from high school she received the award given to the one member of the class that most did it "their way!" An award coveted by her classmates.

At college she met more people who felt that they did not fit in during their high school years. Just as she had, they felt like observers, always watching what was going on and not believing that anyone could take the prom that seriously. But now that she

finds herself in college she feels she has fallen into the high school-college trap. She explains this in her own words.

I'm very flustered with myself and annoyed with myself for falling into that high school-college trap of everything you write being so [Pause] almost masturbatory, I guess would be the right word. I've heard other people use it and thought it was really appropriate. Just have everything so self-centered and so ego-centered. Like everything is about my problems, my issues and what I want to do and [!] really hate that.

Liza first attended a small private Quaker college but was able to transfer to a more open college her second year. She needed less structure and more concentration in the areas where she had more interest. She likes the college that she is attending now because it has less formal structure. She does not have to go to classes on a regular routine. She works on individual projects and is closely supervised by a professor. She feels it is a better system because instead of grades, she receives a personal evaluation of her accomplishments.

She feels that much can be done to improve education such as hiring teachers that are interested in teaching children and in understanding individual differences. The most important change however, she feels, would be to encourage more creativity.

It's a little dismaying to see how little creativity is encouraged. It's sort of a herd-them-in, herd-them-out attitude. 'We got to get them up to this level on this day and move them to the next classroom!' Sort of, almost, just like a factory assembly line attitude.

Creative Forms of Expression

To know Liza is to know her as a writer. It is very hard to separate her from the image she has created for herself. As she says,

People usually know that I am a writer after they've known me awhile or a very short while because I'll usually be either very frustrated over the story I'm

working on or its [makes some funny low sounds] and says, 'I'm really s___ off about a story I've just done!' So people know.

When she was younger, she used to fashion her work after other writers, but she feels she has developed her own voice early. She also feels that she has learned early to say what she wants to say and how she wants to say it.

During her high school years, everything was self-centered and ego-centered, focused on her problems, her issues and what she wanted to do. Writing gave her the opportunity to be someone else and often to escape the world around her. When asked what she was escaping from she said, "From anything!" She never liked being Liza, and writing gave her the opportunity to create herself.

If you don't like what you are you can create a character and be that character for as long as you create it.

She had one character that she had used for many years. Whenever anyone read a story about her they would insist that it was Liza. Liza would become indignant when they accused her of writing about herself and deny it emphatically. Her explanation was that it was not her, only "sort of" like her; like an alter ego of what she would like to be if she could be anything she wanted to be. Many times when writing these character sketches Liza felt that her life was out of control.

Now she is moving away from that and deliberately creating characters that are nothing like her. Finding the middle ground has been difficult. She blames her poetry phase for creating her self-centered mode because she says, "That's what poetry is supposed to be when you're in college." The major shift she feels came when she started moving away from escaping through her writing and began using her writing to work out what she was experiencing. At age twenty she is writing more woman-centered stories because she is studying about and involved with feminist issues.

Her ideas for writing come from her mind, her dream state and also from the immediate environment of things that she is interested in or wants to talk about. She simply starts when she gets an idea and stops when she runs out.

I got the idea about the Winchester House from a woman that goes to the same college. We went to town together and she told me the story about what she had done that summer. When I was writing dream poetry, I had the worst nightmares. Really vivid, horrible nightmares so I would have one of these and write it down and put it down and I had four nightmares and I put all four of them down into the story and one was one I had when I was three years old, that I had for a long time, starting when I was very little.

She would map out a story as she was walking around or in math class when things became too boring, but she would have to write it down soon to remember it. Once she starts writing it the idea usually flows off into something better than the original feeling or thought.

I visualize what I am writing to see it, what happens, to see the characters and what they look like. It's moving [the visualization] like a movie and I'm trying to write a script for it as it happens. And if I visualize a character's face I can always visualize a room. I have no trouble with the room and usually visualize a body. If I visualize a face then I know I haven't done enough on the character sketch or something like that.

She finds the beginnings and endings to be the hardest because at the beginning she is not yet flowing and at the end she feels she has to come to a screeching halt. It is only through fine tuning many revisions that she feels comfortable with what is left.

Most of her ideas are associated with deep feelings that sometimes bring on noticeable changes in her body.

When I'm writing I tend to clutch the pen really hard cause it's a physical exertion. I'm sweating, my skin is getting hot, clutching that pen so I snap the thing right in half. I would go through five of them a month. . . .It's so funny because someone will come in and touch me while I've been writing and my skin will be hot and I'll be sweating and they'll say, 'What are you doing?' and I say, 'I've been writing.'

As she looks to the future she would like to make her living as a writer. Her dream is to be on the level of some obscure writers that are known in the literary world for their greatness. It would not be based on fantasy. She would like to be like Ann Tyler.

Just taking the mundane everyday and making it fly. Just taking real life and adding just a little more color than already is and making people look at it and going, 'Oh Yeah!' That recognition when you read something is what I really enjoy. . . .

She recognizes that to be on that level she would had to have started when she was very young and she does not feel that her accomplishments thus far qualify her to be in the category of greatness. However if it can be obtained by hard work she is doing her best. If she could not reach that level she would accept whatever fate has in store for her as a writer.

If I had a choice between compromising what I consider my best work . . . because maybe my work is on the level of Danielle Steel and I am destined for the best seller rack like in paperback that's O.K., if that's the kind of writer I am. I'll take that if that's all I can. But, if I had my choice between that and being kind of obscure not really, well known, you know, to professors in the literary role, I would chose that because that would feel like I'm more legitimate. That might be a snobbish attitude. I don't know. It probably is.

There are other creative endeavors that she has tried or that appeal to Liza. She has been successful with some and others have frustrated her because she was not able to recreate the exact image of what she saw in her mind.

. . . if I want to paint a picture I can see the picture and I won't be able to make it look like that and it frustrates me to death because I can't do it. I've done art therapy and stuff like that: free form drawing, abstract things, creative self portraits. In a way that's really frustrating because it is the only piece of writing my family liked. I've been writing since first grade . . . but the second I illustrate a story that I wrote, that's the one everyone wants to see and everyone is begging me to send to a publishing house. I wrote it as a present to my little step-sister because she was in the hospital for her birthday.

She has illustrated other stories, but they did not receive the same recognition. One of them was a science fiction story in which after taking a long time to develop the character, she did add stick drawings for all the characters. These were very detailed character sketches, developed over a long period of time, which demanded scientific interaction to figure out the juxtaposition of the new world she created .

She has also had many people tell her that she should do stand up comedy because she can do the voices of people that she creates, but she does not feel that she could do someone else's character or perform on command. However, during her early school years she was excellent at preforming character sketches about her teachers and friends.

Blocks to Creativity

Her needs did not always coincide with what her family thought she needed. Liza's mother wanted her to be more social and to show more concern for the upper middle class values that the mother felt strongly about. However neither parent, though well educated, could write and could not understand the deep desire that Liza exhibited for the literary field. Liza meanwhile was trying desperately to find someone or something to which she could relate. She would use her writing as a security blanket to keep away the hurt in her life and many times just created more hostility.

I would carry my spiral notebook on my clipboard everywhere, to my mother's distress. Carry it to a restaurant with the family. I mean a nice restaurant and have it up on the table beside me, a nasty scuffed up clipboard that I've been writing on. Back then it was really an escape because I was not a happy child and I did not want to be on this planet and I knew I did not belong in the world.

She often found herself out of control. She would become so wrapped up in a character she was writing about that she could observe herself doing things and could not stop herself. When she expressed this to her mother at seven, her mother put her into therapy for two years with an individual who, she claims, only made matters worst.

This was also the time her parents were going through a very difficult divorce and she felt that these sessions helped her mother more than they helped her. Through the therapy her mother gained a modicum of control over Liza. When she went out of control, the therapist's method was to use a holding technique which Liza felt only intensified her depression.

He would get behind you and hold you from behind. Hold your arms like that [demonstrates] and make you count to three hundred and for which a little hard-headed kid like me . . . no way, I'm going to do this and it's supposed to prove I am not the master of my own destiny. Not in control. He's in control or my mom's in control or whoever is sitting on my face at the time. I did this for two years.

She remembers leaving the office just hysterical one day and turning to her mother and saying, "Don't you dare tell me that that was helpful!"

Her mother would also go through her trash cans to find some of her discarded rough drafts and keep them -- only to mention them when Liza became unmanageable.

She would even go through my trash and find my rough drafts because she thought I was writing pornography or something. She would go through and my handwriting is really horrible and she would get these swiggly rough drafts and labor over them for hours and hours and hours trying to find some obscenities that I had written. And then she wouldn't say anything. She would wait until she was mad at me and then she would go, 'And by the way, I know what you wrote!' And I would go, 'Oh, no!'

For the young developing writer this was devastating. She did not want anyone to see her rough drafts until they were in a form that was acceptable to her because she did not want anyone to say that she was a bad writer. She did not know how good she was, but she knew that if she let anyone see her drafts, it would be "deadly!"

While her parents were going through this difficult divorce Liza often felt very insecure. She feels that insecurity and creativity come together for most of the creative people that she knows. Even though she appeared to be an extroverted individual to her

friends she describes herself as being very introverted. Her friends were tolerant of her behavior but could not always understand her need for silence. She needed people in her life, but she would get frustrated when having to deal with many people. She did not want to be surrounded by people nor did she need the constant reinforcement of a large crowd.

I always claim to hate the human race and not to like anyone. People are so hard! And my friends would go, 'Oh Liza, you really don't mean that. You are not mean to me!' And I would usually tell them, 'That's because I like you!' [Lots of laughter] So I find it very hard to get close to people and very hard to trust people.

She was often frustrated with the limitations placed upon her by the adult world over which she had no control, and she would become depressed. She remembers her experience as an exchange student as having been her longest period of depression and writer's block. Not only did she not have outlets to write, but the situation took away all of her controls. She had to abide by the customs of her host country which were very different from her own. Many of the customs took away personal freedoms she had taken for granted in her own home country, such as wearing her own clothes or having her own private time. The organization that arranged the trip did not prepare the students for these changes before the trip. So when Liza arrived in Australia and was told that she would gain thirty pounds, she stopped eating and became anorexic. She had to feel that she had some control over herself and the difficult situation. When she returned home, she had to be hospitalized.

I was going to this school where I had to wear a uniform I wasn't allowed to wear make up. I wasn't allowed to wear jewelry or do my hair the way I wanted. A lot of stuff was dictated to me. I didn't have a car. I was living five thousand miles from home. I had no friends. I was meeting people that I was friends with while I was there. I felt really constrained. Also, it is a very sexist society. My host father loved to have me sit on his lap and he would feel my butt and stuff like that. So I guess that [concentrating on my weight] was my way to really keep my

sanity while I was there because if I was focusing on how much weight I could lose, I couldn't think about how really nasty my situation was otherwise.

The organization that arranged the exchange felt it was the students' responsibility to turn their personalities around to suit the host family, because the host family opened their home to the students. They were also told that if they were not happy, it was their own fault. She could not leave because they would not pay her fare home if she left early. Several of the students learned later that they all had similar experiences. She still cannot write about the experience, but feels that she will some day. She says she is no longer depressed about the situation but she still harbors some anger and when she is angry she loses the ability to speak or write. She feels that she suffered severe cultural shock the whole time she was gone .

Other blocks occur when she does not have enough time to revise what she is writing or she has not had enough time to play with her ideas. However, at times she will consider a piece finished for the moment and send it out or show it to whomever is going to review it. She remembers entering a one-act play this way and receiving a monetary reward for her efforts even though she was displeased with it herself. She also has trouble with deadlines because sometimes the ideas just will not come.

Another thing that she feels blocks creativity is being required to write outlines.

That's the least creative thing you can do because what if you change your mind? What if the character develops in a way you didn't expect? A lot of times my stories will just run away with me. The character will turn out to be completely different from what I first thought they were or their motivations will turn out to be what I first thought they were and I'll just go in another direction that I didn't expect and if I were directed to an outline it would be stupid.

She likes to write in a room where she is not easily distracted. She prefers a bare environment that is almost claustrophobic, like her boyfriend's room. His furniture is closer together and there are fewer things around to distract her. The place

is not as important as her own mood. If she has certain music playing in the background when she begins a story, she has to have the same music playing if she works on it again.

. . .so I went back to it and the first day I started this story I had to have this sound track on and it was a London Cast Recording and it was so horrible, nasty tape and it was in my boyfriend's room.

When she was younger she would have a certain pen or to use different colored pens and finish writing a story with the same pen with which she began the story. She also remembers when she used only spiral notebooks and clip boards. These things are not as important any more. She may still need to recreate the mood that she was in, but the physical tools now play a secondary part as to whether or not a piece is completed. She now has more confidence in herself as a writer.

Nita's Journey - Part IV: Life as a College Student and Young Adult

Feelings About Being a Creative Person

During her Junior College days Nita did not see herself as being a creative person. She thought of herself more as a problem solver and explorer. She still sang but she became more physically active.

I can remember those days being filled with activities. Mostly physical activities exploring the parts of the country that I hadn't seen before, or going dancing with the group that I hung around with. I was also still involved in sports very heavily I still embroidered in my quieter moments. I read a lot. But, I wasn't super creative in anything except maybe in my imagination. I played a lot with my mind. I would review my day and try to envision the next day -- the people that I would meet, things that I would do or play out a whole game in my mind before I played it and replay it over and over again.

She says that this preoccupation with the mind was probably what set her apart from her peers during these years. She was perceived as being too serious or too quiet when all the time it was just a natural curiosity she had about how things interacted. It was not enough, for instance, just to observe an object in nature. She would have to

internalize its relationship to everything around it. Her peers would often not have the patience to examine things with this intensity. However, two of her college friends shared her love of adventure and nature so she did have some friends to whom she could relate.

I can remember one of my friends coming home from college in the states asking me if I wanted to spend my vacation rooting out all the health facilities in the interior of the country. I quickly asked my father if I could go and he said I had five minutes to leave because after that mother would be home and we both knew her answer would be 'no!'

Nita and her girlfriend spent their entire vacation tramping through the interior of the country visiting primitive health establishments. She remembers arriving at one town and being thrown into jail because there was a banana company riot going on. Later she was rescued by a Catholic priest. As was many times the case, the priest was a friend of her father's and just happened to know she was going to be in the area or someone had mentioned that T___'s daughter was in jail. Upon graduating from a university, her friend accepted a job as a state biologist or botanist.

During these years Nita viewed her world as a place with endless mysteries to be experienced and sometimes solved. While other people looked and saw what was right before their eyes, Nita would look further and try to understand the delicate balance that held everything together around her.

I guess I'm a visual person. I would often slip into my own little world after viewing a phenomena in nature. For instance, one time I saw a swarm of army ants traveling on the ground and I wondered where they were going. At some point my physical sight disappeared and I found myself viewing their entire trip on my inner screen. It felt like the question was answered before the question even appeared consciously in my mind and if someone asked me a question while I in was in this state I would just as likely tell them before realizing that I didn't really see their journey with my physical sight. Sometimes my friends would catch me and say, 'Nita how did you know that?' If they had been my friends for a long time they wouldn't even bother to say anything. They would just expect an answer.

Some of these things that Nita saw in her mind she believes to be recordings that her visual memory made while she was experiencing her environment, but some of the things that she saw she would not have had the opportunity to see before because she had never been in the area or read about it.

I remember once viewing a slide show of Machu Pichu, Peru and listening to the speaker give his presentation when something clicked in my brain and I could see the whole area. I started giving additional information about the area and the speaker was amazed that I knew so much about the area. When he asked me when I had toured the area I said, 'A long time ago.' The statement jerked me back to the room and I was very embarrassed because I knew I had never been there.

People often saw Nita as a little bit naive and as a very sensitive person, and she admits that she may have been sensitive.

When I went to Girls' State during my senior year of high school I was unable to go through the initiation that all the girls went through. First, I knew about the whole process before because of my inner sight and second it made me ill to think people would treat each other in this manner just for fun.

When she told one of the senior counselors how she felt, they knew she was sincere in her feelings and excused her from the ordeal without the other students knowing about it. This sense of what was right and was wrong for her continued to have an impact on the rest of her life. It still hurts her deeply to watch individuals treat each other harshly and she will have no part of it.

School Experiences

After she left high school she attended a small junior college in her home town in Central America. Because of her excursions with her father, she was the first girl allowed in an archaeology field class and a geology field class. The classes were known for their rugged and grueling trips into the interior of the country, but these trips were easy for Nita. She had experienced the terrain before with her father and friends.

With her love for nature it is surprising that she did not major in the sciences. Her journals were filled with observations and unanswered questions such as how did she know what they were going to find today? Why didn't the wild boar attack her when she found herself surrounded by them? Or, why did the holler monkeys throw coconuts on her head when they saw her coming with another group? School was not as difficult for her now because fewer people asked her, "How did you know that?"

The small classes and personal attention allowed her time to satisfy some of her natural curiosity about learning and to learn more about how she processed information. Nita was learning how to speak the languages of those around her; not Spanish and Polish, but the languages people used to relate to one another in the many disciplines she was studying. She was learning when to use her intuitive mind and when to trust her analytical mind. After two years she graduated with honors and received her Associated Arts degree.

The step to the university was a little more difficult. Her college entrance scores were not high enough to allow her entry into most universities. She had to obtain letters of recommendation from her college professors and the dean of education from the school she wanted to attend in order to enter on a trial basis. Also, she still needed the personal interaction with her professors that she had experienced while attending a junior college. This need was to be filled in another manner. During Nita's first year at the university she was discovered by the psychology department after she took a required psychology course and participated in some lab experiments that went along with the course. This was her first experience with psi experiments. Two types of psi events were named by Thouless and Wiesner (1947) "psi gamma" and "psi kappa." The first was a cognitive psi where individuals could perceive that which no ordinary eyes could perceive -- deep into the future and far-away in space -- and the second was a motor

psi where they could control physical events by unknown means (Leeds & Murphy, 1980). Individuals within the psychology department were studying the conditions under which the authenticated phenomena occurred. When Nita was asked to read a pack of cards imprinted with different shapes that someone was holding behind a screen, it was quickly discovered that Nita was able to read the deck faster than the examiner was able to turn the cards over.

After a series of tests there was a scurry of excitement and the examiner wanted to continue the tests on another level. The more tests that were run, the more Nita began to understand the need to withdraw from the situation. Physically, emotionally and mentally Nita was unable to withstand the pressures placed upon her. Eventually she had a physical collapse and ended up in the hospital with unexplained chest pains and blinding headaches. Looking back on the incident it becomes obvious that the problem was not only the pressure placed upon her by the psychology department, but also the switch to a large university. Once again she was placed in an environment that was new to her and she needed time to adjust.

Living in the states was a cultural shock. She had to cope with a whole new set of rules governing her movements and ended up having to be hospitalized for several months because of severe headaches. Nita did not feel comfortable telling them what was really going on inside herself. She felt that the stimuli coming into her senses were just more than she could process at one time.

This was also a time of Nita's first experience with racial violence. The university that she was attending and a neighboring university were rioting over racial discrimination. Faced with all of this, she needed a period of adjustment before she could function in this new environment. When it was not there for her, she provided her own time.

She became ill again with unexplained headaches and had to be hospitalized when they became severe. Meanwhile the psychology department provided Nita with the little extras that she needed in order to continue. Nita did not know this until her last year at the university.

Because of this personal attention she was excused from the biology lab because she fainted whenever she enter the formaldehyde room. She had a high sensitivity to smell. She was unable to stand the smell in the biology lab. The smell of the dead animals initiated a series of pictures in her mind that caused physical pain to her body. At this point in her life she still did not know how to block out the pain of others. She experienced the same thing if she were close to a person who was ill or one who had experienced an emotional trauma. She would feel their symptoms in her own body. This sensitivity was to continue for some time. When acts of violence occurred on the campus she was unable to balance her mental, emotional and physical self and once again ended up in the hospital for a period of rest.

In her other classes she was given the opportunity to take all of her tests in a private, closed setting and all time barriers were lifted. Most of all, she was given the personal attention that she needed to personalize her education. She once again graduated with honors and was initiated into the National Honor Society for Teachers.

Nita's two years at a state university were a lesson in learning how to cope. She completely withdrew from all of her past creative activities such as music and most sport activities. Although she still sang in the school chorus as part of her course work, she had no real outlets for the creative energy that built up in her and her headaches intensified. She kept most of this from her parents and by now she had learned to rely on herself to solve her own problems. She withdrew into herself as much as she could in

order to function in the world around her. She was to remain in this state for the two years that she remained at the university.

Creative Forms of Expression

Nita was married immediately upon leaving the university and began the climb back to using her natural creative abilities -- not in singing or writing -- but in problem solving in the teaching field. She and her husband moved to an East coast town with a Navy base where Nita obtained her first full time job in a small school known for its many problems. The principal there had a reputation for taking difficult schools and turning them around. She was to become a mentor and good friend to Nita throughout the years of her teaching career. They shared a common bond -- a belief that all children could learn.

Talk about being naive! The very first day that I entered the classroom, it was after the school year started, I walked into the classroom and a first grade repeater threw a chair and hit me in the temple causing a concussion.

This may have turned other perspective teachers away, but for Nita it constituted a challenge. The fire that she saw in this young student when the chair was thrown was something she could relate to in her own life. The same fire occurred within her when she was unable to cope. She wanted to know why this student felt the way she did. When Nita recovered from the concussion she accepted the challenge that presented itself.

I not only had Rose in this classroom, but I had a minister's son, Dale. Coming from different backgrounds, Rose and Dale were constantly arguing moral issues. Rose's mother was a prostitute and often in jail. Most of the time she was cared for by her older sister who appeared to be following her mother's profession. Along with trying to teach Rose to learn, I also had to provide a place where Dale's value's could be upheld. It took me two months of constant trial and error before I figured out how I could engage Rose in learning how to read. To me this was a creative act. I'll admit that I wasn't thinking about creativity at the time while all of this was going on, but it was still an internalized process as I observed, recreated the scenes within my mind and came up the the common denominator that would trigger a positive learning action from Rose. First, I noticed that she

constantly engaged in a repetitive action, from banging a pencil on the desk to restacking books on the shelf. Next, she was never directly involved in a conversation. Instead she would break into a conversation that other people were engaged in and usually as a reaction to what someone said that wasn't even about her. So I would engage her in an activity [a favorite one was painting or cleaning the brushes] and at the same time hold my little group right next to wherever she was working. I would purposely make mistakes to stimulate a response from her, but the mistakes were always in the area that she needed to learn. Then, I would play the devil's advocate by saying, 'I'm sorry we cannot accept your answer because you choose not to be part of this group' always showing a calm outward appearance while all this was going on. It would make her so mad she would insist on being part of the group long enough to be heard and then retreat once again into her own little world. It didn't take long before Rose was outdistancing the other students because, like everything else she tackled, she gave her whole heart and soul to the process and I kept the materials coming.

At the same time this was going on Nita was also using different strategies with other students in the room. Most of the students were on their own individual learning contracts that she herself wrote and monitored very carefully. Her approach before beginning was to take all the textbooks home, carefully examining the material that needed to be covered and then she would observe all the the children for about a month. During that month she would pattern the behaviors she expected from the children and begin the process of building a trusting environment by promising that all questions would be heard and given a sincere answer, and that no one would harm another student in any manner. Everybody was taught to think about what supplies would be needed to get an assignment done and each child was responsible for getting his or her own supplies. Children were also responsible for making their environment clean and neat at the end of the day. When she knew the curriculum and the children, she would look for groups of children that learned basically the same way and she would group them together, not for ability grouping at first, but by the way they tackled learning. She would then look for "real" learning situations or create real learning situations in the room in which the skills could be used. Cooking was always a favorite, because many of the children came to school hungry.

I remember one little boy named Keith who [I was told] was mentally deficient. Keith could not remember a fact unless he was actively involved with a task over and over again. After repeated cooking experiences I realized that he was not going to understand liquid measurement unless he was allowed to perform the measuring himself. So one morning I brought in the pail and mop, put out the containers he would need and told him that he could play with these things over and over again, but when he knew how many cups there were in a pint or quart etc., he was to come up and tell me. It took every bit of patience that I had to overlook the mess that he was creating. First he would pour the liquid from one container to another and if the container that he was pouring from was larger than the one he was pouring into he would still pour all of the water out into the smaller container causing the overflow to go over the bucket and onto the floor. The children would say, 'Mrs. N. the water is getting all over the floor.' and I would say, like that rug commercial, 'That's O.K.!' until anyone passing the room would say, 'There's water on your floor,' and the children would say, 'That's O.K.!' It took ten to fifteen repetitions before he was able to move beyond the first stage, but he learned liquid measurement!

Nita had to do much fast talking to parents and principals to continue with her techniques, but most of them wanted results and this was something she could give them.

Her observational skills were used in other ways. For instance she noticed that one child tired easily and his skin would acquire a greenish tint. She recommended that his parents take him for a heart examination and when his parents followed through with the suggestion, it was discovered that he had a heart problem which had gone unnoticed because of his hyperactivity. They just assumed that he was tired from the amount of effort he projected. Another example that she gave was a child blanked out repeatedly when he was in the middle of a sentence. He would become disorganized and unable to remember what he was saying. In this particular case it took repeated tests to show that the child suffered from a type of seizure. With repeated examples of observations given by Nita, the family was encouraged to obtain another opinion. Later on in her career she noticed that this same pattern was exhibited by gifted learners, but the distractive staring into space was done by choice when a new idea entered or when the student wanted to relax his or her mind.

The constant searching for individual patterns was to be a natural process for Nita, but it was not only searching for a pattern; it was also knowing what to do with the observed pattern once it was realized. Sometimes she had to go beyond her classroom to seek help from others.

One year she had a group of six children that were having spatial problems. They could not pick out a letter or word when it was on a page with many other words. The students explained that all the words looked the same -- one long word. Up until this point, she was making up a variety of individual sheets for each child to read in a variety of colors, but she did not have the time to do this every day. She asked the Parent Teacher's Association for volunteers to work with these students after school.

This began a long term tutorial program that the parents helped run after school. I made up the lesson plans by telling the parents what to do and they made the materials and taught the lessons. I would continue working with students during the day and parents would continue the work after school.

There were many factors that helped these students learn, but Nita felt that the two most important components were the personal attention and the color coding. The personal attention worked because there was a one to one ratio and the color coding worked because the colors made the words stand out. Nita received a life time membership to the Parent Teacher's Association from the state in recognition of her success with this program. This same process -- only more detailed and a more personalized version -- was used many years later to teach a multihandicapped student to learn to read.

The enthusiasm and energy that was a natural part of Nita's makeup was now being shared with the students that she encountered in order to promote growth in children who may otherwise have been lost in the educational system. She believed strongly that all children could learn and she used that faith to infect others around her

to believe in their students. She encouraged teachers to look at a child's perceived weakness and to think, "How can I turn that weakness into a strength?" She was often misunderstood when she would recognize a pattern that was different and set up a program to accommodate to that difference. However, her biggest fear was that someone would take the individualized program that she created for a child and use it for all children. This fear discouraged her from writing up many of her experiences.

I withdrew from the tutorial program when the principal included other children from different classrooms that were not having the same difficulties. After this experience there was a period in which I was very guarded about what I would do with children. When observers were sent to my classroom, they were often not skilled enough to see a variety of methods being used, especially if the methods were not those that they already recognized.

Nita said it did not matter whom they sent in to observe because often the observers could not pass the stage of looking for the obvious. Also, other peers were often quick to jump to the assistance of the child without allowing them time to problem solve. The natural process for the teachers would be to help students through the activity or pick up after them. Nita's approach was different. She would find out the boundaries of stress in each child and then push them to the edge so that conflict entered into the learning process. At this point she waited until the student asked for help. She would only help with the part asked for and never volunteer the complete process. Everything in the classroom became a problem solving, learning process. For example, if the students were doing a science experiment and they needed materials, then the students had to determine what they needed and how much. She gave them exactly what they asked for. If they asked for a gallon of water and they only needed a cup, she gave them the gallon. They had to determine if it was a good decision.

There were many programs that helped her grow as a teacher. She worked with the non-graded concept when it first appeared. She worked with placing students in

special programs and in one state she helped organize the first educational program that recognized students with special needs. She also worked in several team-teaching situations beginning with the first situation in which team-teaching simply meant sharing an open space and moving on into a more sophisticated interpretation where more formal programs were developed around the needs of each individual student.

I was on a sabbatical after my second child was born when my husband came from work one day and said, 'I'm going back to school for my masters!' I quickly sent out my application and two days later I received a call from a former principal who was now teaching in the university town where my husband was to attend. He told me that if I could be there the next day I had a job! So I left my husband behind to sell the house and headed north. Everything happened in a week!

As Nita was to find out, it was not an easy job that she was going to, but again a real challenge. She and another teacher were given a group of students, placed in the basement away from the rest of the school and told to "do their magic!" It was to be like a school within a school. The principal wanted all these students reading before Nita left at the end of the second year -- her husband was in a two year graduate program. Not only were the students reading, but they read above grade level at the end of the end of the two year period. These were students with very limited experiences. For instance, when Nita asked the students to pick up a pair of scissors or point to a particular animal, these tasks were beyond their ability. They had never seen a pair of scissors or seen the animals mentioned. A visit to their homes quickly told the whole picture.

Betty, the other teacher, and I decided to visit each home before setting up a program for these children. What we found was worse than what I had seen in the most primitive cultures in Central America. No emotion. Very little communication. The parents were unable to answer in sentences. We heard mostly noises, short phrases and independent words as responses. The homes had dirt floors and many did not have windows. Now this was in the cold country! Not the south! I came away from these visits very disturbed. In fact, I had to put it out of my mind and concentrate on the children. We both knew we were going to have to work closely with the home, but Betty was definitely stronger in this area. My strength was planning the program for the students. Her strength was

beginning a community action program. Her husband was a minister and she was used to dealing with situations that were similar.

Nita and Betty had to obtain permission to take over the complete decision-making control involved with setting up the program for these students. Betty was a new teacher to the system, but the principal had enough faith in Nita's ability to give them the control they requested as long as they informed him of all action taken.

We had to set up a high impact classroom with no other interference for the first six months. The environment had to be a proven 'safe' place by the students so that there were no surprises, no fear from anything or anyone. That's how we started, but during this period, we observed every action, every form of communication -- everything and anything that could give us patterns that we could use in building a learning, action packed environment.

Where Betty's faith would waver, Nita's faith never faltered. She now says she did not know any better. She had been taught to solve problems, to seek solutions to the impossible and this was no different. At school the successes were slow at first, but by the end of the first year definite progress had been made. When the students started reading, they read their spoken words first. Nita said, "They not only read them, they sang them and lived them."

As Nita looks back on this experience she remembers her friends, principals and parents saying, "Why don't you write about these experiences!" What these individuals did not realize was that we could not write about the experience at that time. We were too busy "being" the experience. It took every bit of strength that we had to dialogue, to write and to live the curriculum we needed each day just to keep the students "alive" in the learning process.

CHAPTER III
DIALOGUES
Prismatic Vision

I have collected the stories told by four individuals, told stories about them, told my own story through Nita, and have written about the patterns that connected our lives. Throughout this process there has been a struggle to find both form and voice -- Nita's form and Nita's voice -- which would interconnect the patterns of creativity with the inner monologue and outer dialogue that goes on in an individual's creative endeavor. However, what began as a search for creative patterns in the lives of creative individuals has unveiled a larger pattern that encompasses all other patterns. What is unveiled is a whole process of expression, including the inner and outer patterns, which leads to creativity. It was only after a conversation with one of my advisors, Anne Deloria, that I was able to fully understand the connections within the stories of five girls.

Anne: Why are you having so much trouble developing conclusions for this paper?

Helen: The fear is that it has to be written in someone else's form and someone else's language. I am tired of having to translate my pictures and feelings again and again into someone else's language. This time it is even harder because I am defining my own form and the languages do not translate.

Anne: What do you mean?

Helen: It's just floating around up there.

Anne: Explain this further

Helen: When I get ready to write something or bring meaning to something I have to wait until everything on my inner screen gets into place and it is still playing around up there. This inner screen is a stage in my inner consciousness where the feeling becomes pictures that hold no emotion. I simply view the pictures until they have meaning. My inner monologue is saying, 'Hey, Helen, how are you

going to handle this?' 'Are you just going to record what you see outwardly or are you going to merge the two or just interject words where there aren't any?' For someone else this may be easy but I have a symphony going on and you only want one piece! Plus, the piece does not fit. I believe this is what the student, Anne, was referring to when she wrote her poetry. She said, 'When I finally write it down, everything fits so I am reluctant to change it.' In my case something is missing and I am reluctant to conclude this paper. I believe it's the form.

Anne: So you are saying that a form hasn't presented itself to you?

Helen: The monologue of my inner consciousness is entirely different from the writing process that involves the processing of the outer consciousness. Remember, I process inwardly first. Then I search around for a form to put it in. Then, I write! What I write has to be taken inside once again so that I can see if the written interpretation is the same as the monologue with which I began.

Anne: Tell me about it. Let me see it like you do.

Helen: In my inner monologue I would often say to myself, 'I wish I could stop where all the word forms are that go round and round, if there is such a place, but I can't.' Didion says that her pictures shimmer around the edges very much like a schizophrenic drawing [Sternburg, p. 20]. Well, when I go inside, everything that I have written will redefine itself into pictures and feelings. When I take it back inside the images and pictures will go beyond the shimmering pictures. The images continue to move until they become one shimmering speck and with this tiniest speck is associated a feeling of deep emotion. I walk around for days sometimes with the feeling associated with this speck of emotion. I am irritable, restless. I go through the physical act of doing things, but I don't even know what I am doing. Sometimes all I want to do is walk in the woods or hide in a closet. This can be a quick process or a slow process depending upon what I am creating. Eventually colors, smell, or images appear. In fact the image "costumes" all of my perceptions, inward and outward perceptions, and my whole existence. At this point what is occurring is a mental act without discipline. I see these specks when I am awake or asleep. There doesn't even seem to be a division between night and day except that the pictures are more vivid at night. So much so that I get up at two in the morning to write now. When the images come forward the emotion comes forward with it. It's like it gathers specks of emotion with it, but the emotion has to feel right. When the pictures finally stop and words drop upon the paper they have different meaning than when they originated. Not only that, the picture has come in as something else, something I cannot understand when it is placed on paper. Yes, the words feel dead, but it is more than that. I have to become acquainted with myself on paper. I have to become comfortable with my outer consciousness. I am uncomfortable with the experience.

Anne: The same thing happens when the word has been spoken. When it is transformed into the word, you have lost the inner connector, the emotion. We are emotionally connected to the original image and so when the word comes out there's no emotion. It is translated down to a two dimensional version, a linear version and when you lose the emotion you feel severed from the original meaning. For you there is such reverence for the thought form that to capture

the reverence into words feels to you like you are killing it. On the other hand if you can't share the experience. . .?

Helen: I feel compelled to share the experience, but there is definitely a part or section left out. It may simply be my own unfamiliarity with the forms that the outer consciousness takes. I do know that a part of me is left out, my feeling! When the words hit the paper they do not register the deep emotion in the reader that they register in me.

Anne: You get an emotional connection to the image as you knowing it so there is no feeling connection to the translated step down, written version. Is this what you mean?

Helen: And, I feel when I lose this feeling I've lost the meaning. I have to rediscover the meaning all over again.

Anne: So there is a third part of the cycle that you haven't discovered yet which is. . .?

Helen: How to bring the emotion to the paper with the picture. So what I need to do is find the formula of words which do that. Thus far the only way I know how to do this is through analogies.

Anne: O.K. Did you see the conclusion to the paper? What did you see or feel when you finally saw or felt the conclusion?

Helen: I will have to describe the image that I saw first. Now remember, it is not a stationary image so I will have to language what I see. What I am going to share with you is my answer to how the monologue of the inner consciousness and the dialogue of the outer consciousness fit into the creative process of writing or for that matter any outward creative expression.

Anne: O. K., I'm ready.

Helen: The images could be compared to specks of water vapor and what I actually saw was water drops growing bigger and bigger, swirling with different colors into beautiful shaped clouds. Every now and then one of the clouds would become full to its emotional capacity and a drop would fall and form itself into a feeling - still in my mind. The feelings would play with each other - just move around, expand, become large or small until clouds would disappear and all I had was a bunch of unrelated feelings searching for a container. I can't seem to capture the feelings into words using someone else's container. I recognize this as something almost beyond my capacity to do. I never know the form or what I am going to write until I do it, but when the expression does come out it is limiting when a word is framed into a sentence or paragraph of someone else's choosing. Sometimes I am so disgusted with what I write that I throw it back in [my mind] and start again. It must be broken down again and again to return to where it originated only to try once again to come forward. This is very difficult because in the monologue of my inner consciousness the original image is not solidified into one thing, one form or one set of words, but it is different pictures depicting the same emotion. Very rarely do words appear at this stage. The image continues forward again

only this time coming out as another image and another feeling, bringing with it a different interpretation. Now, if I could honestly believe that the readers would do this for themselves I might be able to move on.

Anne: Your task as the writer is to have faith in the original image or feeling and to see the process of writing, of putting your images and feelings into a form or words, as a coded, directed form that you are leading your audience to be able to follow in order for them to recreate what you see in their minds. Each spectrum that drops out is a piece and each piece is critical. To put it more in your words, each piece is like a coded crystal from your prism where the facets are -- in order to stimulate in the reader the reformation of the cloud.

Helen: So what I need to do in writing is to say to the reader, 'Here's the code for what I see. Reform it yourself roughly in your mind?' If I can do this I can release the guilt of not being able to express something in other people's language! The perfectionist in me could not release this guilt, but now I think I can. I was always reluctant to write for someone else, because my inner monologue is so much more developed than my outer conscious expression of writing.

Anne: You just had to have the right person and the right time to be reminded that words are codes and they trigger the mind of the reader. Just as each girl triggered something in you to make you look at yourself as an educator. Try telling their stories in your own words. What did these girls trigger in you so that you could see yourself as a writer/educator?

This paper has had many focuses. The one which I did not understand originally is that the story of these girls is also the autobiography of the author as learner and how she searches just as each of the other four girls do, for meaning and understanding by interpreting the monologue of the inner consciousness in her own life. The dialogue with Anne brought me to this realization. The author has come to recognize herself as learner!

Joan Didion says in *The Writer on Her Work* that her attention was always on the periphery and she actually had to write to know what she was thinking about. I came to realize that this was also true for me. For me writing is a process of translating the moving pictures and feelings that occur with those moving pictures into words so that other people can understand what I understand. For Didion the arrangement of the words is dictated by the arrangement of the pictures within her mind (Sternburg, 1980).

For me this is not so easy. I have trouble translating the pictures into words because what I see within my inner consciousness is three dimensional and full of feeling at a depth where there are no words -- only a reverence for the feeling. This "feeling" I call the unconscious languaging.

When the pictures appear, I distinguish this from the feeling by calling it the monologue of the inner consciousness as opposed to the monologue of the inner unconscious. While examining the patterns of creativity in the lives of these individuals, I have been engaged in the struggle of bringing forth both the feeling component from the unconscious into the monologue of the inner consciousness -- the picture level -- and the dialogue of the outer consciousness that merges the perceptions of the environment. Thus, there is not only the interpretation of the picture to deal with, but there is the need to match the word with the emotion that I feel with each picture and a need to wait until the unconscious, "no word," space creates itself into a form. This is not a linear process. It is a multidimensional process.

It would be like taking one picture from a prism and bringing meaning to that one picture, while ignoring the surrounding pictures that are interacting on each other and are just as meaningful and pertain to the whole understanding of what is visible inside. It would not be the whole story if only one portion were depicted because, other pictures, other stories, are needed to tell the whole story. Telling the stories of all the pictures is what I call Prismatic Vision.

The collection of stories is arbitrary at the beginning, but in fact gives a point of reference far deeper when all stories are put together and examined. What I did not realize when I was telling the stories of the four girls was that each girl had a story that I needed to examine in order to complete the whole pattern for my own creative growth. This was not visible to me until as Didion did, I wrote it down. It was as though each girl

was a mirror that allowed me to see aspects of myself -- reflections not previously visible.

This monologue of the inner consciousness that Vygotsky calls inner speech is not simply the transition from inner speech to external speech to the written word, nor "is it the transition from one language to another" according to Vygotsky (1989, p. 248). It is more involved than that. Each language has its own system and meaning and must be translated as a whole. Vygotsky said that, "The monologue is not merely vocalizing silent speech. It is a complex, dynamic process involving the transformation of the predicative, idiomatic structure of inner speech into syntactically articulated speech intelligible to others (1989, p. 248-249)." What I would call monologue of the inner consciousness Vygotsky would call the monologue. He refers to oral speech as the dialogue. I see oral speech as part of the dialogue of the outer consciousness that can take many forms of expression. Vygotsky says the monologue is almost without words. I see the inner monologue as requiring primarily symbols to convey idea. As the reader experiences the language system and the meaning interpreted by this educator, the story of an educator searching for understanding begins to unfold.

Following Anne Deloria's suggestion I will bring each girl to my inner screen where I will monologue what I see regarding her, give my response as the second half of a dialogue, provide further reflection on the process and then present educational considerations. I have used italics to indicate the language of inner monologue, and again, in bold italics, to indicate the reflective syntheses.

Emily

Inner Monologue - Images of Emily

(I address myself) I want to see the pictures and feel the feelings that tell me the meaning of the experience that I had with these girls. I want to see their relationship to

learning as they explore their own feelings about creativity. I would like to have some sense of what I have learned as an educator about the monologue of their inner consciousness merging with the dialogue of their outer consciousness. In other words, what is it in their lives that is the recognized key that triggered a response in me, the educator?

I am given a moving picture that somewhat resembles the fairy tale Little Jack Horner, only instead of a little boy I see girls putting fingers into pies and pulling out their thumbs for all to see. Each girl's face turns out to be the face of the girls in the story, but their thumbs turn out to be different keys that are then being presented to me. I have no idea what the keys are until I start speaking. I feel that I am being given a glimpse of what I represent as an educator. Then understanding occurs within me. Each of these girls has a component that is crucial to her development as a writer and to my own development as an educator. I see these components as keys. I do not recognize the keys yet, but they are there. I feel them. Maybe if I go deeper into each of these girls I will find what the keys represent. I remind my inner consciousness that I am searching for keys that represent my own growth as an educator.

A sense of deep emotion settles over me. It looks like I'm going to speak this story from a place of feeling as the whole goes back inside to be refocused. The keys appear in the blink of an eye. (I have already written about the interview and now I am taking the information inside again to interpret the words once again.)

The first image that presents itself is Liza. I see that she has all of the keys. The keys become seeds and I am looking for Emily's seed; but Liza's has many seeds surrounding her, more than any of the other girls. I ask again if I could see Emily.

Finally the scene changes to the youngest child, Emily. She is playing with her inner consciousness. Everything is very much still in a free, no form, no demand place.

Her play is undisciplined and everything can still be created from the space she is in. She chooses only occasionally to be recognized as a writer and I see her writing down something and handing it to me. She writes without effort. With very little focusing she picks it apart. Raindrops reappear at this point and I see her catching them -- throwing them up and watching them rearrange themselves, playing with them. She has the ability to view the monologue of her inner consciousness on her inner screen. She taps into this easily and effortlessly. There is no one or no thing saying, "Emily, you cannot do this," so she rearranges the raindrops at will and with great skill and throws them into her outer consciousness when someone demands that she produce a product. She is not finished creating her original idea and appears frustrated. I ask her what it feels like to stop the process long enough to produce a product of someone else's choice. (A feeling of recognition occurs within me.) The more she is asked to write, the more she is asked to stop the original creative idea. There is no understanding on her part because her face is turned away from the stream of pictures flowing behind her. She is stilled. The story picture discontinues. "So, are you saying that we should not stop the process?" I asked my inner monologue.

The stream of pictures within my inner monologue are broken and crystalized. It is no longer just Emily's story. It also is Nita's story that I see, Nita's emotion that carries the picture forward. I feel Nita's pain and frustration at trying to create, to form a piece that is not completed in her inner consciousness. This is the key that I recognize. We should allow more imagining, more playing -- playing with the imagination before one has to commit to an outward form of expression. The more Emily is asked to create the forms of others, the more she is limiting her own original ideas. The more Nita is asked to create the forms of others, the more she is limiting her own original ideas. This need for time to play with ideas is a key connection among the girls.

At this point the picture of Emily enlarges as if she is growing. I feel a pull away from Nita's emotion and a thought enters my awareness. Could it be that when Emily starts playing with some sort of discipline, she reaches a point of maturation when she recognizes for herself when to put her creative ideas into form?

All the emotions of Nita speak to this. It must be an inner determination of how long this play is needed or if it is needed. Only the creator knows. She needs this inner and outer play period. A dramatization and dancing occurs and Emily's picture continues to move. It must be a form of expression in which there is not a need to verbalize yet. Emily appears to be in a flow state , a dream state. Once again the body enlarges, but this time a body moving without a head or feet , a feeling body. Can this mean that the expression becomes known to the body and the body needs to take a decision in the part it is going to play?

When I ask myself if this seeing and feeling inside Emily will come out through her pen I get a big void , a silence. "I wish you would not do that," I say within myself. I have enough trouble dealing with what I know and what I see. I see Emily as a skilled writer at this age, but possibly what you are showing me is that she has a greater gift than what is allowed to be evidenced at this stage? The emotion that wells up in me at this time makes me stop and ask myself a question that Anne Deloria, has asked me many times. Is there anything that resonates in Nita's life that resonates with this child when I think of Emily? Another key surfaces! Could there have been a greater gift in Nita at Emily's age that was denied?

Response Dialogue

As a child I played and played with the monologue of the inner consciousness. I was not asked to develop an outer written language for a long time. I had more freedom than Emily did. It was not by choice. It was because of the situations that occurred in my

environment at the time, but this did not matter. I had the freedom to let the inner consciousness roam where it wanted to roam. I had more personal time. Emily does not. She probably has more than the average child does because her parents are very willing to let her be the writer. They encourage her and name her as a writer, but she has been guided into that form of expression and has not had the opportunity to reject it or to fight it, because she has already accepted that role for herself. It is limiting for her because she thinks of herself only as a writer. She thinks she has the rhythm to write and she does not realize that she is only beginning to write. There may be other forms of expression that would interest her.

The Reflective Synthesis

In some ways Emily seems to be mirroring the stage that I am going through now. Part of the difficulty in writing the conclusion of this paper is that there is so much richness in the inner consciousness that it is difficult to bring it out and there is not anyone who is enough like me to help direct me to shape a public response. I recognize this richness now as an adult. I did not as a child. I am going through this stage as an adult. I view myself in the inner consciousness as very advanced. I have come to this awareness slowly by watching Emily and others like her in my years in the classroom, sometimes painfully struggling for a voice; but I see myself as being very inadequate, a babe in the woods, as far as the formal act of writing is concerned.

Educational Considerations

Emily has an amazing gift, but because she is already recognized, she is not using all she has. The part of her gift that Emily does share within her educational environment pleases peers and educators who surround her. If she were able to wait

until she expanded her inner monologue to develop her dialogue of outer consciousness to its maturity, she might reach her full potential. I feel that an individual has to learn how to control and interact with her inner consciousness by herself. This does not mean that guidance is not necessary. What it means is that the type of guidance an educational environment would give would depend upon recognizing the type of processing that is going on in Emily and providing her with enough "self directed play" experiences to allow her to expand her inner monologue further.

The teacher also needs to be there when the imagining takes on a life of its own to support her through her *original idea* and not impose the idea of another. It would be crucial for teachers to recognize that Emily must decide when she could share what she is experiencing. It would also be crucial for her to recognize that the form she shares may not be writing as she knows it now, but another form of expression.

Hughes Mearns in *Creative Power* (1958) says there is a difference between product-education and creative education. Product-education turns out good patterns in large quantities and creative education in its early stages brings forth a mass of low-grade "stuff" while the student struggles to express herself and not use the forms of expression that reflect her teachers. Product-education does not allow students to develop through their own individual efforts while creative education does. Creative education waits for the natural maturation of each student. It does not rush the creative expression within the individual, but allows for it to come forth slowly or quickly -- naturally. The focus in educating Emily should be to allow her the space to internalize her own experiences at her own pace in a creative educational environment.

AnneInner Monologue - Images of Anne

Anne is a deeply reflective child. As I watch her within my inner consciousness I see that she does not understand what occurs within herself. She looks over her shoulder to see if anyone is watching her. At first she is reluctant to carry on a conversation until my focus of attention acknowledges her. She then, through short sentences here and there, begins to uncover the depth that is there. I see a picture of the earth hurting and am reminded that she once said, "The earth is hurting and no one seems to care!" She sees no one in her surroundings caring for the environment. The picture continues with people milling around without emotion. Her unconscious emotion begins to expand and for the first time I can see the deep emotion that she has expended become the words of her poems. No pictures. Only waves of emotion surge through my body. She takes moments of time -- of deep emotion -- and puts them into three or four sentences that capture that moment of emotion for a little while, but she has difficulty flushing it out or transforming it. She cannot change its form and be comfortable with it and she will not change it unless it is absolutely necessary! As she said, "Everything fits!" When her ideas finally drop to the paper from her inner unconsciousness they fit perfectly into words of expression that provide for her emotional balance. She says she is against changing it because it will change her own emotional balance. If I suggest a change she says, "It may fit for you, but it does not fit for me."

Anne's images float in my mind -- cactuses, lizards, her birds, her plants -- not her words but her images. I see her searching her physical environment for the right word to take inside herself. She has a sensitive awareness of visual images which she draws into herself at a deep emotional level. Occasionally she becomes overloaded with the emotion she experiences. She has to retreat. She goes to her room and sits and looks

out of her window or waits for a storm to appear so that she can release some of the emotion that she feels into a poem. The force of the emotion propels her to search for the right word, to monologue with it until it is ready to emerge. This is her choice. She writes when she is ready.

Response Dialogue

Anne has such deep emotion that when her monologue of inner consciousness decides to come out, it flows into natural forms of poetry. It does not flow out as essays or even short stories. Instead it drops into forms of poetry like musical notes flowing onto the paper. The words have a sense of feeling that is translated into a rhythm.

These are similar to the images that appear in my own inner consciousness. For Anne there may be musical notes floating on an ocean or a tree or sunset or whatever she is interpreting at the time. When the notes finally appear in their exposed forms you find yourself saying, "Can a child of six or ten have possibly written this?" They appear as streaks of brilliance. She spends so much time in the feeling of the unconscious that when she does finally complete the process and capture the notes on paper, the words move people. Her feeling level can move people. She possesses the key for emotional stimulation of the writer -- something that I am learning about as an adult.

I recognize that Anne has learned to interpret the emotional component of her inner unconscious into the words that she writes -- the ability to drop emotion through her words onto the piece of paper. We both have a rich reflective character, but I, as an adult, am searching for the key of how to bring emotion to my words while Anne is already doing it as a child. She is not as reluctant to show the liveliness of the forms of nature that she experiences as emotion within herself. The difference among Nita, Emily and Anne is that Anne searches her outer environment for the means of interpreting what

she feels in the inner consciousness. The other girls search inside themselves to interpret what they feel or see.

Reflective Synthesis

Anne has the ability to put into form her feeling and emotion -- or is this just the sharing of the fragile inner sense of herself? Is this the same? I have not answered this question to my satisfaction. When Nita was this age, ten, there was no putting into form the pictures that were floating around in her mind. When she sang, she could put feeling into the song that she sang, but she was not translating the emotion into words. Instead, she was bringing the emotion to the monologue of the inner consciousness and finally into the words that were already there in the song. She could move people with her singing in that moment of song, but there was no original idea, or pictures -- only deep emotion. After she sang she became disoriented. She did not know where she was. The singing took all of her emotion; but most of the time when the song was over she became angry or depressed. She had either depleted the emotion that was in her and could not function any further, or the emotion that she felt in the inner unconscious that came forward through the song was not completed at the end of the song, but kept coming. The emotion was more than the song. She needed a creative form of her own to frame the excess emotion. At this point she would become explosive or overly active. The difference between Anne and Nita is that Anne does not release her emotion until it can be released at the right time, a time of her choosing, into a poem which is what a poet learns to do.

Nita is just beginning to work at this depth with the written word and finding the courage to express the fragile inner sense of herself. She is also still learning how to match the emotion of the inner unconscious to the word. Anne's story gave Nita the insight to move ahead because she recognized that she is learning to release the creative emotion into a form of her choosing. Anne demanded that this be done at a very early age. She had the strength within herself to stand firm against those who wanted to interfere with her form of outer expression. Nita is developing that strength.

Educational Considerations

The observations that I have made lead me to believe that Anne may not become a writer when she gets older. Only time will tell the truth of that statement, but I do not think she will choose to be a writer. I believe that her poetry is more of an outlet for her emotions than a natural desire to express herself in writing. She is very articulate and word conscious. She will hear or see a word and carry it around in her inner consciousness and monologue with it, exposing it to a variety of combinations and eventually using it in one of her poems. But writing is something she has to do to release the emotion inside. When she latches onto a word, she builds emotion around the word while she monologues with it. There is a reverence for the word. If the emotion does not please her she does not write with the word or create something with it; nor does she direct that emotion into a poem. The emotion determines the form that merges into a poem. There is a stronger focus within her beyond the writing, that forces her to bring order and balance into her outer environment. When she sees something that she feels is out of order she creates the order not only in her poetry, but in her interaction with her environment.

I believe that Anne has a more natural skill than writing poetry. She has the ability to create with her hands and could easily become an inventor or an interior decorator or designer or architect. She loves to create extreme balance and beauty around her. She does this by manipulating her environment into a form of beauty. She has a keen sense of beauty and balance. In fact, her main wish as a fifth grader is to be able to buy a house, an old ramshackled house, and fix it up from the inside out. If she is locked into the path of the writer too early in her life she may not get an opportunity to explore some of these other avenues.

The key to educating Anne would be to provide opportunities for her to explore other forms of expression. Instead of dealing with writing as an end product, I would encourage her to use her writing as an emotional outlet and to allow her creative energy to go into other forms. On the other hand the key to educating Nita would have been to allow her to learn how to translate the inner consciousness into a form of her choosing. I realize that for others the reverse may be true; but whatever the process is, it begins by first recognizing how the child is functioning! In education we tend to teach the subject rather than to work with the child to see how the visual, how the writing, how the drama or music serves the child.

There are other considerations, of course. Anne happens to be a kinesthetic and visual learner. This tells me immediately that if I am going to promote her growth, I am going to have to use visual and kinesthetic teaching techniques. Although some educators recognize this need theoretically, they are still locked into using techniques based upon the beliefs of the school systems where there is no integration of kinesthetic or visual teaching techniques. Also, many times materials are not available that recognize individual differences, and only lip service is given to this idea.

It is important here to recognize that our focus in education may have to change. We have focused on the subjects that we teach and not the individual needs of the student. I realize that this is not a new idea, but it is an idea we in education have not followed. Each child processes in his or her own way and it is our job as educators to find out which way that is, before we place requirements upon the child that are unrealistic.

For example, recognizing the depth of Emily's monologue of inner consciousness may require providing more opportunities for allowing her to playfully interact with her language. For Anne, the inner unconscious becomes full of emotion and she will need opportunities for a less structured environment to allow for the emotional discharge. In each case writing will be experienced differently. One student would not need to focus all of her creative energy into her writing and it would be a mistake to try to pin her down and force her to write before she was ready. For instance, Anne won a National Writing award for elementary school children when she was in the second grade. She wrote the poem, not in school, but in the car on her way to school from something that she saw. After she wrote it, she was finished. It did not need editing. She now has the ability to play with words easily and there might be a period in her life when she will use words in a chosen profession; but if you push her or try to force her, she may rebel, as she does occasionally now. Mearns (1958) says that most children possess a written language adequate for all purposes of their lives. If we allow this written language to grow naturally, the individual can only be strengthened.

Anne also needs time to process inwardly before she is asked to perform. Educators may see this as wasting time because she simply sits there and stares into space; but she really is interacting with her inner monologue and outer dialogue. I remember an incident when she was sitting at a painting table staring at a piece of blank paper. The children around her were well into their second and third pictures while

Anne did not look as if she were going to begin. I would come by every now and then and sometimes say, "Just begin!" or something similar, until I realized that she was beginning. She was processing her picture inwardly like everything else she did and she would not start the picture until the right stimulus appeared from her outer environment to trigger an inward response.

Anne needed to take a walk outside in the woods or to have time to reflect upon her experiences until something gave her that impetus. With Mearns' creative educational philosophy she would have had the time to walk in the woods. In the gifted classroom sometimes she would draw at the designated time and sometimes she would get up in the middle of another lesson and go to the painting table and paint. In the regular classroom she did not have this freedom. This shows another difference between product-education and creative education -- the use of time. Product-education requires results every day. Creative-education often thinks in terms of years.

Anne was also completely absorbed in what she was processing. To interfere with her self-established procedure would be asking her to go against what was natural for her to do. This absorption is another difference in product-education and creative-education. Mearns says there is a "fierce self-motivated stirring of genuine creative activity" that far out weighs the students' absorption in product-education environments (1958, p. 33). How many times do we start our students on their creative journey only to ask them to stop when they are deeply involved in a creative endeavor?

Megan

Inner Monologue - Images of Megan

When I invited Megan into my inner consciousness I saw her releasing different colored balloons. I tried to get her to stop and talk with me, but she was not interested in talking at first. She did not want to be reminded that she was a writer in her earlier

years and she refused to look me in the eye. "Megan, it's all right. We won't talk about being a writer. Tell me what you have been doing during the years that we have been apart." Another balloon is released. "In my younger grades I wanted to be recognized as a writer . I wanted people to know me as a writer," she says. Each balloon represented aspects of herself that she released through her elementary years. All of the balloons are released and she begins walking away from her writing. "Are you saying that you do not recognize yourself as a writer now?" I asked. There is a feeling, a pain within my own body as the image of Megan retreats and my inner monologue picks up the following reflections. I will write them in words, but I am seeing a moving picture of what I am writing.

In her younger years, she wrote easily, beautifully. She also acted and danced, but she really had a way with words. Her friends looked at her and saw her as being different because of the way she acted when she wrote. This bothered her as a young adult. She completely lost herself in her inner monologue. When she was not conscious of anyone around her or speaking to her, a book could crash down beside her and she would not budge. Her friends in her gifted classes let her play this role. They left her alone when she wrote, but her peers in the regular classroom would badger her until she would come out of the creative state, completely disorientated and angry. Most of time she was completely depleted of energy and unable to carry on with the rest of her work. At times it would take her days to regain her strength so that she could function in her other classes. She was emotionally crippled until she could regain her strength.

When Megan reached high school her parents did not recognize her as a skilled writer, because, as writers themselves, they did not recognize Megan's writing as anything out of the ordinary. And yet, this is a child who really wanted to be recognized as a writer and needed to be a writer. She felt it with every aspect of her being. She

knew she could write. Whatever it is that is in someone that says, "I am this or I am that!" spoke to Megan. She lived to write. She did not have a choice as Anne or Emily did, because she invested every bit of herself in her craft; inwardly and outwardly the pull was equally balanced.

When her parents did not support her efforts, she started to withdraw into her own inner consciousness and when she finally came out of herself in high school she would not recognize herself as a writer either. As she said, "I write for myself now, only myself."

She could not write in English class because they used formula writing and she already knew the basic rudiments of her craft. She was beyond the formula process of writing and resented the fact that she was expected to write this way. She could not understand why the teachers could not recognize that what they taught was only needed if you had not developed yourself as a writer. If you knew how to write, if you had already established voice, you just wrote! This does not mean that she did not get good grades, because after she figured out what they would accept, she gave it back to them, but not without much heartache and resentment.

Megan had a very deep perception of her psychological environment. She was able to see what the adults in her environment expected of her. On her own, she wrote about other things that she perceived in her surrounding environment that were more important to her, such as the conditions of the homeless, the lack of sympathy for the elderly, and the devastation of broken homes. Her inner monologue and outer dialogue merged into an expression of poetry motivated by her deep concern for what she saw. On the outside she acted as counselor to her friends. Now she wants to be accepted by other people, but she still holds her inner monologue aloft. She is involved with cheerleading and other social activities, but she does not want to identify herself as a cheerleader or

as a writer. She states fanatically that she does not want anyone putting any labels on her because she has not finished creating herself yet. She still wants to evolve and become whomever she is.

Even now she recognizes that she has what it would take to be on the genius level, but she does not want to put herself in the creative state. She does not want to experience the feelings associated with being in the creative state. She feels she would have to give up her life to those feelings and if she continued in that state for any length of time at this age she would be giving up her life, her passion for the external world. However, one part of her still wants to be recognized as the writer because the image that reappears at this time is the image of a Megan attempting to live a life without any breathe when writing is withdrawn.

Response Dialogue

Megan was just beginning to learn how to merge the inner monologue with the outer dialogue in her own form of expression, but she chose to withdraw from consciously using her inner monologue so that she could function more successfully in her external world. This is the key I recognized in my own life -- the need to make the choice as to which kind of consciousness would play the major role in my life. The pain she was experiencing as she was going through this period of her life was more than she could handle personally. Now she wants to serve humanity, but she does not yet recognize that she does not have to deny herself the internal world to do so and that is what her religion is asking of her. She does not recognize that she needs help understanding what is natural for her. At this time in her life she is choosing to allow her religion to dictate to her where her focus will be. As she said, "When you go into the inner monologues you may see what life on Mars would be like and the people that live there. You can communicate with other life forms, but you don't even know who you are

or the people that there are around you." So she has, while experiencing the inner monologue, the ability to see other realities, but she chooses not to use this ability.

However, the compassionate self still exists in her inner realms and maybe she will be able to merge the inner and outer consciousness together at a later date. It has been my experience that it is not unnatural for the external environment to be the main focus of ones existence at this age.

Reflective Synthesis

I had much compassion for this child when I worked with her and still do when I see her struggle today with the role her inner monologue is going to play in her life. As a young child she found it easier to function in the creative state. The ability to enter the creative state became more difficult as she became older. As she reached the deeper levels, she was unable to balance the energy flow and lost the ability to come out easily. Her friends did not recognize her need for time to readjust to her surroundings. The pain that she experienced attempting to meet the demands placed upon her from the external environment was the same pain Nita felt when she was Megan's age. Nita, too , entered the creative state very easily, but when she came out and looked around her, her behavior alienated her from her friends. This was one of the reasons she would not let too many people close to her during her high school years. She did not join their cliques even though she had many opportunities to do so.

For both girls, Nita and Megan, their service and compassion pull them away from their feelings of alienation that the writing caused them. Both girls saw the suffering that occurred around them, Megan saw the

elderly and Nita saw the poverty that surrounded her in the country where she lived. Both would often become so wrapped up in the visual images that surrounded them that they would have to release these images in their own form of expression or into the monologue of their inner consciousness to be reprocessed. When they would not release their inner monologues, they could only recognize the compassion and the compassion became distant without the emotion of the inner monologue. Instead, Nita, observed her surroundings without playing an active part in them. She began to withdraw. Megan also withdraws into her many activities.

Educational Considerations

Megan, and Nita at Megan's age, would need an environment in which she felt safe. She needed an environment free from judgment of what is considered right or wrong in order to allow her fragile inner feeling to come out without censor. She needed an environment that would allow the natural expression of the child to dictate what was acceptable and what was not acceptable is needed. Such an environment would allow time for the natural entry into the activities that were provided and not a scheduled time for every part of the learning day.

For instance, Nita was forced to move from one activity to another without anyone ever asking her if she had finished processing the first assignment. Nita missed half of what was going on around her. It did not matter what the class was or how good the teacher was. She could take in only one intense learning session a day because she needed the time to take it inside and run it through her own inner monologue. Nita needed particular kinds of activities to follow an intense lesson. She could still be involved with activities, but only activities that did not require thought -- activities such as walking in the woods, eating lunch, sitting on a swing, playing games to name just a few. Nita

could not process direct conversation that required deep thought if she was already working on another creative idea. Both Megan and Nita would need to complete the creative state until it ran its course, because once the creative seed was planted it would run its' course with or without their directing it.

The incubation time, or gestation period as others have called this part of the creative process, would be completed! In the creative-education environment, Mearns called this a "free" school. With my experience as educator I realize that everything has form so I would hesitate to say "free school." The form would be what was created by the students -- a school environment that would have no set curriculum, no set "subjects of study," no textbooks and no recitations. It would be a school without the usual machinery of lessons and assigned tasks (1958, p. 36). The work that we would be admiring would be the expression of the students' own language and not that of an adult. The student would decide when work was ready to be viewed.

If we were to attend a product-education school we would have to be aware of what was on the agenda ahead of time so that we could prepare ourselves for the journey. This is what Megan was alluding to when she said that she wished she could get her assignments the day before. However, the similarity between product-education and creative education according to Mearns' philosophy stops here. Megan wanted to interpret her assignments by herself first and then meet with her instructors on a peer level to discuss her interpretations. In product-education the emphasis would be on predetermined interpretations rather than those of the student.

Like Megan it was difficult for Nita to do an activity just for the sake of doing an activity. She had to know how that activity related to what she was learning in the real world. Until she could answer this question in her own mind, she could not put the emotion into the learning experience and, for her, learning without the emotion was not

learning. The emotion guaranteed the remembering. Without the emotion Nita would not remember. Any activity that Nita brought to herself would be more meaningful than what anyone else would assign because there would be more depth. The problem with teaching a child like Megan or Nita would be in bringing closure at a specified time. The old Socratic method of learning would challenge this type of learner to ask questions, to think about the answers, to respond in writing or speaking, and to continually refine their own inner monologue and outer dialogue until they have exhausted all possibilities. However, their time table would have to be their own.

When I think about the four girls, I find that I can relate most to Megan. I am like the others at some time, but the compassion I felt for Megan when she said, "I do not write for others anymore," hit a really deep feeling with me. When I replied, "That's your choice!", I remembered that was my choice too. In fact, in the remembering, much submerged anger came to the surface for having denied a part of myself, for not being allowed at school to draw from the greater depth of my being. Anger that may not have been released earlier was released with this memory. As an educator it would be important to understand the effects of not allowing the inner monologue and the outer dialogue to develop simultaneously -- to recognize that this same anger may appear in others if they are not allowed to express themselves.

Liza

Inner Monologue - Images of Liza

As I invite Liza to enter my inner screen I see a girl with a heavy burden upon her shoulders. She appears weary from all the weight she has had to carry and behind her is a trail of debris that has fallen off -- the weight being more than she can carry. The image changes continually until everything has fallen off and she is standing tall,

confident and self-assured. While I was interviewing Liza this image continued to build itself. There was more that could be described, but the basic picture is here.

Response Dialogue

Liza was the last individual I interviewed. As I listened to her talk, I could see images of the struggle she went through to maintain her own individuality. She had all the keys the other girls had and one more. She brought to my mind all the keys that triggered responses in me as an educator: having to create and form a piece that is not completed in my inner monologue; being able to bring the emotion from the inner unconsciousness directly to the outer consciousness and into a form of expression; and having to make the choice of which consciousness would play the major role in the creative expression. The added key that I recognized in Liza's life was that she did not give up the belief in herself as a writer no matter what outer or inner pressures existed. She kept up this intensity into adulthood. She could slip into the creative state naturally. She could lock the force of her emotion into the words she wrote and when others discouraged her, she still kept going: She developed the capacity within her monologue of inner consciousness to formulate thought easily.

This developed naturally from attending to her monologue of inner consciousness. She did not see pictures, but she came through the emotion or the senses to build the thought that would later be interpreted into the best words she could find on the outside.

She, like Anne, searched her outer environment for the correct stimulus to trigger an emotional response. Much of her work was done externally, but the emotion had to feel right before she could begin. She generated so much emotional energy or physical strength that the force of the strength would crack her pencil when she was writing. Her body would become hot from the exertion of the creative state. She played with the words until they felt right. She looked for the unusual combinations, but she

did this on the outside not on the inside as Emily did. Nita's emotions opened up into pictures. Liza's emotions open up into words. She has a natural ability to do this, but she has also spent every possible moment perfecting her craft, even defying her family and friends when the need to do so occurred.

In the first grade she knew intuitively that poetry had to have a certain meter. She sensed the rhythm of the words early in her development. She had a visual way of writing -- experimenting and improvising externally. Unlike Emily, who could hold a story in her inner consciousness for months, Liza had to write everything down quickly before the words brought on by the feeling left her. She had to recreate the memory of the emotion to recreate the creative state, but she could not play with it in her mind. She could only play with the words on the paper. She developed her voice early, along with many rituals to help her continue to work in the creative state. Her strength comes from not giving up on merging her own inner monologue and outer dialogue in order to make her words come alive!

Reflective Synthesis

The struggle of Liza to maintain her own individuality can be closely compared to the struggle Nita had in her own life. Liza's fury and anger at the early age, the defiance through her school years all resemble Nita's life patterns, only Liza did have help along the way. Nita had only the understanding of her father and the beauty of her physical environment. Nita taught herself to find a release from some of the anger by spending a lot of alone time in the woods. The key in Liza's life that triggered a response in me, was watching Liza developing her craft at the expense of everything else, continually putting herself on the firing line and fighting with every breath within her to be herself. This brought a

sadness to me and a need to reach out to other individuals who were involved with the same struggle. With this observation came an understanding that this is what I do as an educator to all individuals whom I teach. I provide them with a safe space to process and voice their own language.

Educational Considerations

In many ways Liza needed an environment that would have let her explore her inner monologue to the fullest, but for the most part she created what she needed. It was not easy and she experienced much emotional stress, but she had and still has the intensity needed to follow her own inner guidance wherever she is. The diversity that she experienced provided her with the fuel that she needed to search for, to find, and to define her own form of expression. In fact she is a good example of what Vygotsky was referring to when he said, "Children are involved with establishing form that they are defining," (1989, p. 214). Liza has visibly spent her life time defining the relationship between thought and word. Her search demanded that she create a space for herself or she would destroy herself in the process of trying. What she is now experiencing in college comes closest to meeting her educational needs. She now works under a self directed, guided course of study planned by her and her advisors. You have to wonder though, what would have happened if Liza had had the consistent mentorship and guidance that she needed in her younger years.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the story of each girl and focusing on what it has to tell us and how it is connected to other stories is the process I call using Prismatic Vision. If we are to see the whole we must look at every picture, tell every story, and reflect on every portrait of the Prismatic Vision. Each story has implications for education. We must consider Emily having to create and form a piece from an incomplete inner monologue; Anne being able to bring emotion from the inner unconsciousness directly to the dialogue of outer consciousness into a form of expression; Megan having to make the choice of which consciousness would play the major role in her creative expression; and Liza not giving up the belief in herself as a writer no matter what inner and outer pressures existed.

These are keys which opened doorways for my understanding of myself as an educator. As I viewed these same patterns in my own life I realized that no matter what the age of the individual, there was a deep desire to bring meaning to her own inner monologue as it merged with the outer dialogue into a form of expression. This is the creative pattern. This pattern weaves through all thinking, all learning and all forms of expression. For these five individuals it just happens to be a search for a written form of expression, but it could as easily be another form of expression because what is important is the process that occurs before the creative expression emerges consciously or unconsciously. The creator has to create an expression not necessarily of words, but an expression of forms from deep within herself. As Gregor Sebba (1987, p. 98) says, "It can be a language of new material to be used." He goes on to say that this is how civilizations are built. Apparently language comes out of something that is felt as a new "law of the work." The language finds expression in its buildings, its customs; in the

infinite ways it is transmittable and it all comes out of the unique intensity of the creator. *The unique form that is a creative act, comes from the individual if we allow for the unique form of self expression to emerge.* The creative act is also a way of accessing learning. Sebba (1987, p. 96) says, "Every child is like every other child, except that there has never been one exactly like that." I feel it is not our job to make every child like every other child, but to take each child on her own individual journey so that she can share her unique quality with society.

My own experience in education recognizes those individuals whose pattern of ordering begins with an exploration of their own inner monologue and outer dialogue. These individuals come closest to the process of bringing something into being, even meeting their own educational needs. The accessing of the inner monologue and outer dialogue and its impact on creativity is important.

For this paper it is enough to recognize that by making it possible for a child to express his or her inner monologue, we open the doorway to accessing all learning for that individual. The individual can then open up to other forms of expressions. In recognizing the connection between the inner monologue and the outer dialogue and allowing it to reach a conscious state, we give access to learning for all individuals. The growth of understanding that evolves when an individual is allowed to process his or her own inner monologue and outer dialogue not only leads to the unfolding of a creative act, but opens the door to understanding how the thinking process unfolds for each individual.

I realize now that in order to write this dissertation I had to enter into the lives of these creative individuals to live their ideas, to see their forms, to watch their imaginations and, as M. C. Richards (1980, p. 21) says, "to write from the inside," because that is my focus as an educator. If we understand how individuals create, how individuals learn, how individuals see, both inwardly and outwardly, then we may be

able to understand how they think in order to accommodate the volume of new information that will have to be synthesized as they grow to maturity. I also had to follow my own story and to bridge an understanding of what has passed and what is occurring in order to see what needs to be provided for creative individuals to encourage their growth in an educational setting. According to M. C. Richard (1980) one must see inside to understand the needs of children, and it is up to us, as educators, to be guided by their needs.

This is where you begin when working with children. You do not place upon them a set curriculum or set process. You respond to the natural growth of the child. You do this by providing experiences that allow the inner monologue and outer dialogue to grow. This supports the expansion of the imagination and provides for the natural development of the child's own thinking processes that may or may not develop into creative expression.

The imagination and a child's thinking processes are not separate from one another. The final creative expression depends upon the interaction between the inner monologue and outer dialogue. They are closely integrated as we can see in the case of Nita. Growth in her imagination depended upon the use of the inner monologue, but the blending of both, the inner monologue and the outer dialogue, created her outward expression. By allowing the inner monologue to play in an imaginative manner, she had more opportunities to synthesize her own thoughts in outward expression. For Nita this meant journaling with herself until the words said what she wanted to say. For Emily this meant perfecting her inner monologue before putting anything on paper. Most of her work was done on the inside first. Both the inner and outer expressions need to grow simultaneously if we are to increase the creative potential of the individual.

Nita and Liza experienced a certain joy in their play with their imaginations. The difference in the two girls' development, however, came in the outward projection of the inner monologue. Nita spent more time in developing the inner monologue. Her opportunities for outward expression were not plentiful. As a result, she continued to go deeper into the exploration of the inner monologue. Her imagination was filled with color imagery without the balance of outward expression. As she moved deeper within herself, she was filled with inspiration and reverence -- a feeling that came out through her music. She became the music and was able to move people with the volume of stored up emotion which could not come out any other way. Liza reached in the opposite direction. She had to search her outer dialogue for the group of words to complete her inner emotion.

Emily practiced the expression of the inner monologue by interacting with the imaginary on her inner screen. As she began participating with these imaginary characters, she gave them strength to perform on paper. The more life she gave them, the more they performed. In other words, the more she interacted with her inner dialogue the more she knew what she was thinking. The balance between the inner monologue and the outer dialogue was narrowed. For Emily this was initiated through play and exploration of the inner monologue.

As I have worked with creative students through the years, I have found that this is what distinguishes the students that are known as creative and the students who are not known as creative. This ability to play with the imagination increased their potential to express themselves creatively. It is important to provide opportunities for play because the creative potential is there in all students. It is simply not allowed to develop in some children.

Cultural beliefs can also affect the development of this innate ability and puts restrictions on its development before it can ever begin. For instance, we should resist pushing the work ethic onto children before they have had opportunities to develop the imaginative play that is "their work." It is obvious that Megan's religious beliefs influence her creative ability when she says, "I am a Christian now and I realize the importance of 'seeing' what is around me and not what is inside me." This outlook is not bad. It is just not allowing the individual to balance the inner monologue with the outer dialogue. It shuts down a part of our natural processing functions, and yet society frequently does this to us. There is so much "out there" for students to understand, but the outward understanding needs to be integrated with what is known inside.

The educational needs for the young child (through second grade or age seven) would include opportunities to experience this play -- giving the student opportunities to write, to paint, to play without the continuous restrictions of predetermined forms. This means that our assessment tools used at these ages should match what children are experiencing or else these tools should be non-existent. I would think a journal or portfolio of progress would be of more value and be a more accurate description of student growth than tests.

By the time the students have reached ages eight, nine or ten until probably around age fourteen, they have the potential to create with great feeling because they appear to be centered in their emotions. Their experiences are weighed against what they feel. The inner monologue requires an emotional response. If their emotional experiences are given opportunities for self-expression, discipline problems could be almost eliminated. Most discipline problems are the result of a natural outburst when a student's self-experience is denied and an internal power struggle ensues. This inner emotional energy can be strengthened and directed when it emerges as experiences

through drama, music, physical education and an exploration of the environment. These are not the only experiences students at this age need. Balanced with these real experiences should be periods of quiet and independent play that would provide opportunities for reflection and the integration of the emotion experienced as a result of the interaction with the environment. George J. Seidel (1966, p. 8) says in *The Crisis of Creativity*,

Genuine creativity will always involve individual reflection. This is the ultimate human instrument or 'tool' of creative work in no matter what area, and no matter how many reflective minds may be involved. And, it must be the training and development of this indispensable 'tool' with which both the creative individual and society as well must be concerned.

As the child grows from the age of seven to fourteen, he or she gradually develops more interest in the surrounding environment. The interest continues to expand like concentric circles once again with the self in the center. This can be seen in the way Anne personalized each plant, tree, animal or person. She gave them feelings and internalized their images, playing with them in many imaginable combinations. She "sees into" these living things. She takes their images and emotions into herself to experience within her own inner conscious monologue until she has explored every possible combination and finally finds the balance of all of her perceptions that can then be put into a poem. In order to do this children this age need an opportunity to observe and explore the environment.

As I have watched other students, I see the need to touch, to interact with something -- most of the times with each other because nothing else is available in their school environment. Instead of exploring a "rich" environment, they explore each other. They learn all of their limitations, all the boundaries, before they can settle down "to learn." This learning, the interaction with one another, is so much more "real" than

their dry textbooks. The textbook does not demand the whole body experience that they appear to need during these years. The wise educator has already figured this out and has his or her students actively involved in their learning.

Once again, as students reach beyond their immediate environments and stretch their interests to a far wider environment, their sensory capacity begins to expand and overload if not given an opportunity to integrate into a form of expression of their own choice. Sometimes this overload is more than the child can stand, as in the case of both Liza and Nita. Recognizing that this is what is occurring allows the educator opportunities to provide for reflection or opportunities to expand the contact with the surrounding environment. Along with the growth of the sensory processes comes a deeper sense of perception as each object in the environment is brought into contact with the monologue of the inner consciousness. The importance of a nourishing environment is obvious! What students learn is a reflection of their environments. If their environments are bleak, their forms of expressions will also be bleak.

As their outer dialogue is merged with their inner monologue, students should be given opportunities to express what they are "feeling." It is important that the expression not be the formal language of the teacher, but the language that students are experiencing at that age. Thus, learning to read, which at times can traumatize a young child if not a natural process, develops easily if allowed to be an outgrowth of a child's own inner monologue and outer dialogue. The outgrowth may present itself in images first. Reading should be drawn from children's own images and gradually grow into the words that they experience. As they read and write their own images, writing takes on a new meaning. Students read and write or draw to become familiar with and develop the way they think.

Seeing the needs of this age student begins with a close examination of the environment in which we are placing students. Environments need to provide opportunities for students to play with their imaginations, opportunities to explore what they are experiencing with their whole bodies, opportunities to take inside what they are experiencing in order to juxtapose these experiences with as many combinations as can be created inside until they feel something "fits," as Anne would say. Also, they must be given opportunities to explore beyond their controlled environment. Then, and only then can they be given opportunities to express themselves at will.

Rudolf Steiner says that at this point we are giving individuals opportunities to think with sensation, feeling and will. In doing this we are developing a "participatory consciousness." This means that the individual is moving within life and experiencing it in thought. Steiner says the child begins developing "a thinking which sees through the images of life, the faces, to the beings who form them." This is not simply visual thinking, but what Steiner calls "insight" (Richards, 1980, p.15). It is my opinion that this is also the creative process in action. Thus education should allow students to open their imagination by letting the images of our environment speak to them. By trusting their intuition, they begin to experience a higher level of creativity. This is what Anne did and why she was so successful in capturing a mood or feeling in nature.

Even though this study began with a search for patterns in the lives of creative individuals and progressed through the autobiography of an educator, we are talking about how all students begin to think and learn. Each student and teacher brings to the learning experience his or her own unique stamp of processing that is very individualistic. The individual becomes "the knower" rather than the teacher, because the teacher has not had the experiences of her students. What she brings to the learning experience are her own experiences. What she will process will be entirely different

from what her students process. Even though she can enrich the experience of her students, it is unfair to place her form of expression or her consciousness upon students.

As students move into the high school years there are many more restrictions placed upon them. The lens through which older students view the world becomes wider, but there are too many people trying to narrow the lenses. The effort on the part of the student is almost too much to cope with unless he or she has a very strong will, as in Liza's case. Think of all the time and energy she had to spend maintaining her own individuality at the expense of her health! Fourteen, fifteen, and seventeen year old students are bombarded with curriculum areas before they have had the opportunity to develop a voice of their own. Therefore, there is a striking out at the environment rather than a feeling of wanting to go deeper into an area of study.

This striking out intensified with Nita until she burst upon her college years with all of the force that had suppressed what she had wanted to express during her younger years. Moving from one curriculum area to another in forty five minute blocks was not the answer. Longer periods were needed for Nita to internalize all that she was learning.

For a child who has developed an excessive amount of creative ability this means long hours internalizing what is being presented. The presentation itself may take very little time. For Nita this meant long hours journaling with herself and dialoguing with her friends until she could internalize the information and bring understanding to it in her own vernacular. She would write about it, discuss it with her peers and eventually understand its meaning for herself. The pressures placed upon her from too much stimuli and too many diverse topics made her ill and unable to function. Her inner monologue insisted on understanding before she could move to another topic area. If the experience inside had no relationship to what she was experiencing outside, the search

became more intense, deeper, and more exhausting because it had to be categorized inside the inner monologue that existed. As more experiences developed, it became easier, but only if she had the opportunity to express what she knew in her own form -- the form of pictures and color -- the feeling of inspiration. Eventually the answers came out as intuition, but the process could not be explained because her language was different. It was not the developed formal language of words. It came from a deep space inside her because she had to develop a sophisticated inner monologue that had not experienced the balance of the outer dialogue. The inability to bridge the inner monologue with the outer dialogue may be the underlying similarity in students experiencing difficulty expressing themselves creatively. This difficulty is a symptom of their lack of balance.

Nita had to be brought back into the external environment around her in order to experience the outer dialogue. She was constantly being asked to interpret other people's languages -- English and Spanish -- using not her voice, but theirs. This is what we constantly ask children to do even though it may not be another language when we say, "No, say it this way." "The period goes there!" "This word would be better!" For whom? The teacher, of course. If we could lift our requirements and allow the child to develop naturally, I strongly believe each child would acquire the skills that he or she needs as those skills are needed. I am constantly asked by my students, "Did I say that right?" and I reply, "I don't know. Did you?" If they say "yes," I let them go on. If they say "no," I ask them how I can help them or I read it to them and let them decide what is needed. I am reminded of the time I made a suggestion to change a word in Anne's poem and she said, "That doesn't fit!" What she meant was it did not fit her voice. The word I wanted to substitute only clarified my voice, not hers. Liza, too, demanded that everything she learned be placed in her voice and, in doing so, her grasp of her own creative expression was strengthened.

During the adolescent years, students should be given opportunities to explore subject areas with greater depths and over longer periods of time. I believe much can be accomplished by promoting one, two or three areas of study -- some of which should be selected by the student. Whatever the subject area, a certain depth of understanding should then be required before moving to a new area of study. The arts, as an exploratory avenue of expression, should continue as a regular course of study, allowing the student to express what he or she is experiencing in another form. The integration of the sciences into these forms of expression is equally important because as the child perceives his immediate environment his need to interpret what he sees or feels is a natural outlet of his or her curiosity about that environment. Perceiving the immediate environment runs parallel to other studies throughout the educational experience. Education then becomes, as Steiner says, the balance of thinking, feeling and willing (Richards, 1980, p. 38).

Society is no longer in need of an educational system that mirrors what others have already discovered, what others believe and what others have organized into the same patterns. If we seek reform in education, we will need a new vision, a prismatic vision that draws new meaning and new insight from the patterns of the many stories within the whole of education. Creative individuals may have the potential to offer this wider vision of our world.

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