

PERSONAL CASE HISTORY

ELIZABETH ROBINSON RATCLIFFE, born in Vermont half a century ago to parents home on furlough from the mission field in China. Father of New England--mother of Western pioneer stock. Both essentially products of Victorianism: emotionally reserved, though intellectually and religiously open and freeminded. Father warm, though expressing of this permitted mainly through his endless collection of jokes. Mother passive, longing for physical warmth but believing that sex(interpreted apparently also as physical contact)was only for procreation.

The three siblings born of this union(3 years apart, two oldest male, lastborn female), were endowed with physical and mental benefits. School achievements no problem, friends relatively easily acquired. Both brothers became physicians. Elizabeth, following college entered nursing school for about 8 weeks, and then gave up personal involvement with a medical career by marrying a surgeon. This choice of mate proved to be almost a perfect matching of neurosis and the marriage lasted almost 20 years, producing 4 intelligent, attractive, achieving and complex children.

For Elizabeth, finally deciding to get a divorce(after 3 years of therapy), was perhaps the single most-important step taken in individuation in some 40 years. After so many years of "failure", camouflaged to the world as Success(with a Capital S), it was first shattering, and then freeing to finally feel successFULL by choosing to make a break with so much personally destructive interaction.

In today's jargon, my HERE AND NOW self arrived where I am through a multitude of changes and slow transitions. In spite of those many changes, I still feel myself pretty much as I probably came into the world: naked, shy, sensuous, trusting, a bit scared--

intelligent, intuitive, inventive, somewhat iconoclastic, dedicated to whoever and whatever

seems to have a raw deal--

full of ambivalences, quite strong, dependent, independent, tense, flexible, reserved, friendly, self-effacing, wanting approval, aware, generous, selfish, excited by new ideas, having great difficulty openly expressing anger or any sort of negative feelings.

My whole open-ended human bag of bones somehow being held together with a crazy sense of humor persistently attached to <sup>the</sup> inescapable paradox of beauty and sadness at being turned loose as a human traveller in this marvelous old world of ours.

It used to be when I filled out an application and came to the section:--HOBBIES--I felt embarrassed...really I didnt have any. Finally I learned to fill that space by writing in:--PEOPLE. Primarily my interests all have had to do for as long as I can remember with people--what motivates them, how they think, what they are into, how they feel about everything, how they relate to those they love and those they dont love. Martin Buber, Rollo May, Carl Rogers, Carl Jung, Teilhard de Chardin have had important impacts on me. I still read them for refreshment. Relationships and people. They really turn me on.

So that, I guess, is why I've finally come into Counseling...to learn how to go about making what has always been my avocation into my vocation and at the same time provide me with an income and a sense of self-fulfillment and a positive connection with human love, and hate, life, and death, suffering, and joy. And in the process of learning how to turn avocation into vocation, hopefully I will continue my own growth, and expanding awareness, and humanness.