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Introduction

I'm writing an after action report on the raising of my first family. In the military, after action reports are "lessons learned." In my case, it should be quite instructive. For one thing, my first family is a rather absolute failure. For a second thing, I am embarked on raising a second family in my retirement years. The portents are pretty good.

I'm writing this account to share with others who were raising families at the same time I raised my first one. There are bound to be some commonalities. There are lessons to be shared.

A great many factors contribute to personality. My grown children were obviously influenced by their genetic inheritance from me and their mother. They were also influenced by the home environment. Other influences were the schools they attended, the kids they played with, and the various professionals who treated them for ills, real or imagined. They picked up a lot of the progressive zeitgeist from people around them in Bethesda, Maryland.

I dedicate a significant amount of attention to the genetic factor. It cannot be changed, and I cannot blame my ex-wife, my children or myself for that which we cannot change. It is important to attempt to identify those things that are not likely to repeat in my second family. Those would be factors that appear to have been attributable to Mary Ann's genetic makeup, not my own. I am raising my second family with a different wife. The evidence so far is that my two young children have been quite different from birth from my three grown children.

I give attention as well to the home environment factor. We are consciously raising the children quite differently than my first family was raised. I focus even more on schools, therapists, and playmates. It appears that my grown children are not alone in their lack of success. Many of their millennial peers have likewise "failed to launch" and failed to form families, marriages, or even stable relationships.

Race plays a role. My ex-wife and children are very conscious of, and proud of, their Japanese heritage. Moreover, they have been subjected since their early years to a barrage of what is popularly called cultural Marxist propaganda about the evils of Caucasians, European culture, males and straight people. It appears to have been designed to alienate them from their roots. Given the racial factor, it also served to alienate them from their father.

I do this analysis for a number of reasons. Part of it is self-justification – I don't think my first family's failure is my fault. Another part is the desire to explain this rather total failure to my present wife. Perhaps the most honorable desire is to examine what went wrong in order that I can do a better job the second time around. Lastly, the factors that I would say poisoned my first family are still present in American society. I would like to call attention to them for the benefit

of my Ukrainian friends contemplating raising families in America, and Americans who might consider raising their families abroad.

The Family Environment

Mary Ann and I had strongly different opinions on what we could expect of the children. I expected them to take responsibility for getting up in the morning, doing their homework, cleaning their rooms and other such tasks. Mary Ann did not support me. I wanted them to do their homework before they watched TV. They watched TV. I wanted them to get out of bed before noon on weekends. As if to spite me, they made a point of sleeping in. This was a battle that I was not going to win. Without Mary Ann's support I would get nowhere. She feared that we would ruin the children's self-esteem or something if we asked them to work. I forget what the excuses were. At any rate the children were never expected to contribute to the household. Moreover, they found that they could talk back to their parents with impunity. In their early teens they learned that they could swear at me with impunity. I had the difficult choice of having a fight with my wife and losing anyhow or biting my tongue. I chose the latter.

The children did not respect school work. This is a common enough attitude among children everywhere. Their attitude was that they should do the minimum. Just get by, and spend your time doing more enjoyable things, such as watching television. Naomi was the only one who showed much interest in academics, and that was only in certain subjects.

The dysfunctional family environment was an impediment to the children developing the strength of character to overcome their inborn weaknesses. They were able to take full advantage of their parents' differences of opinion and avoid becoming socialized. It was easy for them in the short run, but the long term consequences are horrendous.

1. None of the three children has, or has ever had, a successful romantic relationship.
2. None of the children is married, or shows any sign of getting married.
3. None of the children shows any promise whatsoever of having children, or being fit to raise them.
4. Two of the children are not working as professionals. They have never been able to take advantage of the educations they received from quite respectable universities.

I summarize this as the conflict between a character-centered and a therapeutic worldview. To my way of thinking, every child is born with strengths and weaknesses. The parents' job is to help the children capitalize on their strengths and overcome their weaknesses. The therapeutic school of thought considers the child's happiness to be the highest good. The objective is to accept the child as is and help him or her adjust in such a way as to derive the most happiness out of life.

The conflict goes even deeper. My character-centered view posits that a child owes something to his ancestors and the society into which he is born, a debt that he repays through successfully raising the succeeding generation. The therapeutic school of thought views each child as an atomistic individual with no obligation except to maximize his or her personal fulfillment.

Personal fulfillment requires a self-discipline that all three children lacked. Without it they all floundered in the real world. Long after all three had cut me off I wrote [this piece](#) offering them my unsolicited advice on how to prepare themselves for times to come. I heard only from Naomi, who told me that some unspecified part had mightily offended Jack. I responded evenly that he had my email and number – if he had something to say he could tell me himself. They certainly never took my advice, however convincing the evidence that it would have benefited them.

My adult children grew up unfettered by any sense of obligation. Our financial situation spared them any concerns about paying for an education. Their society freed them from the constraints of sexual morality, civil behavior and dress. In my view, this lack of constraints, this freedom from obligation, allowed the worst elements inherited in their genome to ruin them.

Genetic factors – reflecting on the childhoods of my grown children

I started writing about my former family about 2011, when it became clear that they had rather completely cut off communication. That decision of theirs made it clear that I could have no further influence on them. In fact, they had avoided listening to me for at least a decade prior. The material here is a collection of recollections I have gathered over the years.

I have become increasingly suspicious of vaccines over the years, to the extent that there has been only one vaccination of one of three children in my second family. The Covid episode has made me many times more suspicious. I have read and reviewed "Turtles All the Way Down," Peter C. Gotzsche's "Vaccines: truth, lies and controversy," and seen the movie Vaxxed by Andy Wakefield. All of the children had the full schedule of childhood vaccines. The ways in which my son Jack is an abnormal child appear consistent with vaccine injury.

There could be other environmental factors at play. Mary Ann drank fluorinated water through all three pregnancies. We had glyphosate in our diet.

I discuss the children's experiences with driving and bicycling separately. The fact that children are under no compulsion to drive, and usually want to, means that the traits they display behind the wheel are more likely innate, not a reflection of anything we did as parents. Bicycling takes no special strength or talent, but it does take a measure of character, or determination.

Jack

I think back to how early I knew that things were not right with my first family. It differed with each child.

My eldest, Jack, was always a passive child. Two early scenes stick in my mind. The first was playing ball with him on the back lawn of 2120 Huidekoper, where we lived until Jack was seven. The next door neighbor was an adopted Hispanic kid named Federico, about Jack's age. I was in the backyard kicking a soccer ball around. Federico eagerly chased the ball and tried to kick it. I kicked it to Jack who stood and watched impassively as it rolled past him. He was simply not involved.

The second incident that I remember was talking to Pauline Locker, a neighbor whose daughter Emily was just about Jack's age. I was talking seriously about the great things I expected of Jack. Pauline, a child psychiatrist, just gave me a sort of a pained look as if she knew even at the age of two that it would never be. It is a hard thing for a father to accept that his child might not measure up. And a good father does not accept it. He puts it out of his mind, working as hard as possible and hoping for the best. But as the evidence accumulated over the years, it became more and more clear that Pauline's instinctive, reflexive first take was on target.

We enrolled Jack in St. Patrick's nursery school when he was two years five months old. He had problems socializing with the other kids. As they sat around in their social circle, Jack would lean against the other children, annoying them. The school psychologist looked in and suggested that we get physical therapy for him. We found a woman named Therese Charles who treated him for "tactile defensiveness" among other diagnoses. She gave him therapy that included rolling big balls around and feeling all sorts of materials to get his body used to its surroundings.

Sometime about kindergarten Jack got speech therapy with a woman named Eleanor Khan/Silverman. It was a fairly brief process and it straightened out his use of the letters L and R remarkably well.

After two years of nursery school the rest of the class moved ahead into kindergarten. The school recommended that we keep Jack back because he was not developmentally ready. We did so, as a result of which he was the oldest child in his class all the way through school up until his graduation at the age of 19.

Jack did not form many friendships in his elementary school. Among other things, there were logistics problems. All of the children were driven to school in carpools. Getting children together involved having them driven here and there by nannies. At the end of the day, however,

Jack was simply not terribly interested. He had several play dates with a kid named Bobby Lefkowitz and one time arrangements with quite a few other kids.

At the age of seven Jack joined the Cub Scouts, Pack 666 which met at the National Methodist Cathedral on Cathedral Avenue. Other fathers in the pack were movers and shakers. Bill Bennett, part of the Reagan administration, showed up with his retinue of bodyguards. Jack did not develop any particular friendships or interest for the Cubs and chose not to move on to Boy Scouts.

We moved from Washington DC to Bethesda Maryland in the summer of 1989, when Jack was seven. He did not leave behind any significant friendships. He found two playmates his age, David Haft and Nick Channock, in the new neighborhood. David's father was a senior law professor at Georgetown University and Nick's father was the head of pediatric oncology at National Institute of Health. Both kids had stay-at-home mothers. Jack played with them quite a bit at least through his early teens. The other boy in the neighborhood, Jason Cook, was already regarded as quite weird. He made it clear early in high school that he was gay. Another boy moved in next door with the arriving Clinton administration. Lowry was a solid Arkansas boy, self-assured and outdoorsy, and he simply never connected much with Jack.

David Haft invited Jack to join him at summer camp at Camp Greenbrier, West Virginia, about the summer of 1990. Jack went to Camp Greenbrier several years and enjoyed it. I do not recall that he made any lasting friendships there.

Jack showed several changes around the age of 12. His lack of interest in school work became more pronounced. He would escape into Dungeons & Dragons, fantasy literature, and television. He didn't enjoy talking with anybody in the family. His mother was never much of a conversationalist, but I had attempted to engage him in topics such as biology, astronomy, medicine and other subjects in which most boys are naturally curious. He simply refused to engage.

About this time we started talking about careers. He was not interested in discussing it whatsoever. He informed me that he did not want to work for "the man." I tried to draw him out about who "the man" might be. He didn't want to talk about it. This is evidence to me that he was picking things up from the kids around him. His peers seemed to hold a general lack of belief in the system. That would include the educational system, government and corporations one would suppose as well. It also indicated that he was picking things up from popular culture. About this time Jack started listening to music through his earbuds. Earbuds or not, it was often so loud as to be distracting as I was driving him to and from school. I didn't listen closely, but the music was quite obviously nihilistic, antiestablishment, and in some measure anti-woman and anti-white. The hostile passivity of his earlier childhood was increasingly evident, as was the

predictable path through adulthood.

Jack never learned how to deal with the computer. If the printer jammed he called on me to help him out. He likewise could not deal with software glitches. He did not have the patience to think them through, or to listen to me as I explained how I solved things. His major interest in computers, starting about the age of 14, was pornography. We could not keep him away from it. We tried to shame him. It did not work. We tried to limit his access to the family computers, also rather unsuccessfully. He lied about it, the lies becoming obvious only when the viruses made the computers inoperable. I made it clear that pornography was a dangerous distraction. It kept him away from forming friendships with real women. My admonitions did not faze him. He never had a girlfriend in high school and so far as I know never sought one.

Sometime in high school Jack was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, later modified to ADHD. It was a highly fashionable affliction; everybody had it. Jack had a psychologist, Dr. Barbara Ingersoll, who talked with him about his life and problems and introduced him to another doctor, Jay Giedd, who started him on some medications. As I recall we went through Ritalin and then finally settled on Dexedrine. I had used Dexedrine in college and it struck me that Jack got a huge dosage, but he stoically underwent the whole treatment.

Meantime we had him talking to a psychotherapist, Dr. Drake. I do not remember the issues to be addressed. Presumably they included pornography, which concerned Mary Ann and me, his schoolwork and other anxieties.

I am happy to say that sometime in his senior year Jack got fed up with the whole thing. He said he was going to stop taking pills. He quit cold turkey. He didn't get better, but he didn't get worse.

Naomi had the best synopsis of the whole deal. She said "You become your diagnosis." There were so many experts giving Jack cause to believe he was deficient that he decided he would go along with the game. If he was deficient, we should expect nothing from him. And nothing was exactly what he produced.

Jack Driving

The way a child turns out is a function of many things: genetics, parental influence, school influence and societal influence. How do you reduce the variables in the equation? There are things that just about every child wants to do. Driving a car is high on this list. I taught Jack and Naomi how to drive. The difficulties they encountered would seem to be to be attributable more to genetics than any other factor.

Jack didn't start to learn until he was about 17 years old, his junior year at St. Andrews. I had wanted to set as a precondition that he ride his bicycle 100 miles, a demonstration of some minimal commitment to his physical condition. There was no time limit for the ride and he had already ridden 75 miles when we were on a bicycle excursion in Nova Scotia when he was only 12 years old. Jack, however, resolutely refused to take the challenge. Driving him to St. Andrews school was an inconvenience; it would relieve the burden on the parents if he drove. Mary Ann prevailed, but only after a matter of a year or so, and I caved on the requirement that Jack do something to get his body in shape.

At that point, 1999, we had three cars in the family. Mary Ann and the babysitters drove a 1993 Ford Taurus. I had traded my old Volkswagen for a 1995 Ford Windstar. I had bought a 1996 Chrysler Sebring for myself. I taught Jack how to drive in the Taurus.

Jack simply had no mechanical feel for cars. He did not sense where the wheels were, how moving the steering wheel affected the direction of the car, or how to comfortably keep the car pointed in the straight line down the road. He had a difficult time mastering parallel parking. He did not have an instinct for choosing the appropriate lane, or anticipating upcoming turns and getting into the right lane. He accepted my suggestions with relative good grace, but he simply did not internalize them. It was clear he would not be a good driver.

We were nonetheless committed that he would be driving. Fearing the worst, I bought a 1992 Lincoln town car for his use. Since he would be driving his sister to St. Andrews school, a distance of about six miles each way, I wanted the two of them to have a lot of steel around them. The car had belonged to an undertaker. It was a kind of a reddish-brown. Jack initially resisted because he thought it was a girlish color, though it turned out that when he started driving it to St. Andrews it had a certain *éclat* and he grew to like it.

We got the car about October 1999. It needed some transmission work, and it was November before Jack started driving it. Within a week he had his first accident. He was driving in the right lane of a four-lane road. The road split – the right lane turned to the right and only the left lane continued going straight. Jack, however, continued going straight and ran into a stout curb, breaking the wheel. He tried to mount the spare himself but had no luck. As noted above, he has no mechanical sense. Neither did the guy he was with. The wheel was rubbing on the fender and he couldn't remedy the situation. It turned out that he had mounted the tire backwards – reversed the rim. I got it straight and he drove home. I found a replacement wheel in a junkyard and we bought a new tire – total cost about \$200. He was back on the road.

Sometime in January he was driving to St. Andrews School at dusk. There was a deer in the road. The deer did not move. Jack continued driving toward the deer. Jack hit the deer. It knocked out the right headlight and bent the fender. That required about a month in the shop and

about \$1200 to fix. We hoped that Jack had figured out the importance of defensive driving. You have to look out for trouble, and don't trust other people – or deer – to know what's good for them. He was back on the road.

In the middle of March Jack was driving home from school with Naomi down Seven Locks Rd. in Bethesda. As the police reconstruct the situation, a car in the oncoming lane was signaling a left turn. It had its wheels cocked to turn left. Another oncoming car rear-ended it, pushing it into the downhill lane in front of Jack. I privately feel that if Jack had had his eyes open he might've seen the situation developing. He might have gotten his foot on the brake in time to avoid the accident. In any case, he did not, and he plowed into the Toyota that came across his path. That totaled the Lincoln. Fortunately he and his sister were able to walk away from it unhurt. I never got credit from Mary Ann, Jack or Naomi for my foresight in buying that two ton Lincoln, but it had done its job. After three months of negotiation with the Geico insurance company I finally got back most of the money I had put into it.

Jack displayed a similar lack of aptitude when it came to bicycles. I had made sure that he always had a bicycle and continually stressed the fact that he should learn how to take care of it. I do not recall that he ever as much as successfully changed a flat tire. He certainly did not know how to adjust the gearshift. Yet, despite all that, he would later lobby strenuously to have me pay \$40,000 to some for-profit college for him to get a certificate as a diesel mechanic. He absolutely refused to see that there was a connection between learning how to fix a bicycle, on which all of the parts are right out in the open and accessible, and fixing heavy machinery.

My observation is just that Jack is a klutz. He did not have enough mechanical sense to do the one thing that he really wanted to do in life, drive a car. There is no explanation for Jack's ineptitude other than genetics. He simply never had a sense for tools or anything mechanical.

Naomi

Even at the age of four Naomi was throwing epic tantrums. Mary Ann not only found them impossible to deal with, but thwarted me when I attempted to do so. Naomi also lied vehemently and obviously. Lourdes, the babysitter, saw things pretty much the same way I did. However, without Mary Ann's support the two of us were unable to deal with the problems.

- I recall an incident that took place in the master bedroom of the Mohican place house into which we moved in the summer of 1989, when Naomi would have been 5 1/2 years old. Naomi physically threw herself with such force that she hit her face against the fireplace, resulting in a star-shaped scar that she still wears.
- In another incident about the same time, she was screaming and lying, out of control. I grabbed her hands and spanked her and told her that that kind of behavior was not

permissible. Mary Ann said that she was going to call the police. I told her to please go ahead. Naomi needed discipline and she wasn't getting it. I was applying some that was long overdue. Mary Ann backed down and did not call the police, but neither did she ever support me when I called Naomi on either her temper or her lies.

- Here is yet another anecdote from the same timeframe. In summer of 1990, when Naomi was 6, the family went for a hike with Mary Ann's brother and wife Carlie in the 'Gunks, Shawangunk Ridge on the west bank of the Hudson in New York. We walked about an hour and a half – maybe four miles – then came back, as I recall by a circular route.

Year-and-a-half old Suzy rode on my shoulders; Jack and Naomi walked. On the way back Naomi complained she was tired. It was clear to me that she was manipulating us. She demanded to be carried like Suzy was. I said, no, a six year old can certainly walk. It wasn't that far or that hard.

Mary Ann, typically, did not support me. Her solution was to carry Suzy herself. She is not a strong woman and Suzy would have weighed 20-25 lb. I could carry Naomi's 40-50 lb. with ease. My concern was that she should be walking herself. However, it was not the time and place to pick a fight with Mary Ann. We got back, and Mary Ann complained the rest of the day about her sore shoulders. I bit my lip. Naomi must have been gloating at the consternation she had caused. Her manipulation had succeeded once again.

- Naomi's threat of anger holds the world at bay. She learned to canoe at Camp Alleghany at age 12, in the summer of 1996. One nice day in late summer she, Suzy and I went to Fletcher's boathouse so she could practice. There was a gusty wind blowing upriver.

When I headed for the stern of the boat, Naomi announced that it was her position. She could manage a boat – she would sit there. I said that the heaviest person goes in the back of the boat. Otherwise you can't control it. Naomi got mad and insisted. Her temper is such that even then she always got her way. Her mother had been submitting for nine years already to her emotional blackmail, and I stood alone if I tried to resist. I shrugged and moved to the front of the boat.

We set out. With me in the bow the stern almost rose out of the water. Naomi had no luck controlling it. The boat spun in the wind. She was furious.

I attempted to help. I shifted my weight to steady the boat, and did a bow stroke with

my paddle in order to try to steer it. Naomi screamed. She accused me of sabotaging her effort to manage the boat. I took my paddle out and let her try. She attempted for another five minutes or so, getting madder by the moment. Suzy sat mute, like a mushroom in the middle, not saying a word.

Finally I put my paddle back in and got the canoe back to the shore. We got out silently and drove home. The day was ruined.

This anecdote stays in my mind because it is so telling. Naomi is able to dominate almost any situation through the threat of anger. She cannot, however, dominate the wind and water. She cannot dominate society. People get tired of it and avoid her.

- One day in Naomi's junior year in high school I could not find my pajamas. I knew that St. Andrew's school had a pajama day. I asked Naomi where they were. She said she had no idea. I was reasonably sure she was lying, and made the point that my pajamas were missing quite frequently. Where were my pajamas? Nobody knew.

A couple of months later I happen to be in her closet to adjust the pegs on which she hung her clothes. What I find? My pajamas. She did not admit that she knew they were there. She did not apologize. Mary Ann did not think it was a big deal. Why in the world should I be so upset?

- In high school Naomi took to sneaking out at night. She routinely lied about where she was and what went on. One night we had to fetch her from the police who had busted up an underage drinking party. Thank goodness she was not caught with marijuana.
- She lied to us about spending time with boys. I attempted to ground her, but as usual I didn't have much support. One evening when she was supposed to be studying with a friend it turned out that she was with her Dutch boyfriend Stephen. This was such an egregious lie that even Mary Ann agreed I should go pick her up. I drove out to Stephen's house and got her. On the way home she jumped out of the car as it was rolling about 20 miles an hour, did as good of a roll like she had learned in gymnastics class, and ran away I did not know where.. This was before cell phones. I could not abandon the car and chase her. She had made good on her getaway.

Sometime during high school we got a psychotherapist for Naomi. I think it was just after she jumped out of the car as I was driving her home from Steven's. She never understood why she was going. I knew perfectly well. It was because we were taking a therapeutic approach as an attempt to resolve to a character deficiency. At any rate, we never saw any change, any benefit of the investment, and she outlasted us. We stopped the treatment as she was preparing to go away

to college.

Like Jack, Naomi chose to go to college in California, on the opposite coast from her parents. We did not see much of her. She came home with her boyfriend Steve a couple of times. I was appalled at the way she treated Steve and told her as much. I also told Mary Ann. Nobody cared. Naomi and I simply did not see much of each other, and both considered it for the better.

- Yet another striking incident I recall was on the day of Naomi's graduation from UCSC. She was 21. We were in a rental car driving north from Salinas to San Jose.

We were stuck in traffic. Naomi said she needed to go to the bathroom. I said I would pull over as soon as I saw someplace that looked like it had a bathroom.

Traffic was crawling. Naomi repeated her request several times over about 20 minutes, but neither I nor her mother nor her boyfriend Steve saw anything. Finally she screamed, in such an uncontrolled, violent way that I pulled over immediately and let her go to the roadside and do whatever she needed to do. I could not imagine that she would act that way in front of a boyfriend. Or, that she could not control her bladder for another few minutes until we found someplace more suitable.

- The last such incident prior to my leaving was at her aunt Rosie's wedding in spring of 2015. We were in some small hotel in the picturesque resort of Kernville in the Sierra foothills. I forget the details, but I fully remember Naomi's uncontrollable rage until we satisfied what seemed to me to be an unreasonable request. Probably that she get a room to herself.

Naomi's temper has remained in evidence since the divorce. There have been long periods of time during which she has not talked to me.

I helped Naomi as she was divorcing her first husband, Luke. I gave him some frequent flyer miles to get across the country to wrap things up. Naomi said that she had married him simply to give a jobless guy with hepatitis C access to her healthcare. She was, however, sleeping with him at least on and off. I didn't understand and didn't ask.

Naomi and I got together when I was in the United States in 2011. She loaned me her car, which was very useful. She told me what her brother Jack was up to. I had hoped to meet Jack, but he was not up to it. He finds some way to fight to take offense at everything I say or write. Naomi and I talked about Jack and Susy. We shared the view that neither of them was doing much worthwhile with their lives.

Naomi and I had periodic Skype conversations over the next two years. She visited Oksana and me in January 2014. Although the conversation is always somewhat brittle, we got through a week together without any conflict. I introduced her to some friends I thought might be useful to her in her career. Problems resumed when she found her boyfriend Chris.

- Naomi got incredibly angry when I made a Facebook post attempting to form a connection with her then fiancé Chris in 2014. She immediately unfriended me and did not talk to me throughout her engagement, the short marriage that followed, and her separation. During the marriage she informed me that I was going to have a granddaughter and that I would never see her. Shortly thereafter the marriage went on the rocks and nothing was ever heard about the grandchild again. Naomi vehemently resisted my attempts to contact her during this timeframe. So did her mother. I wrote that we should get together to support Naomi in her time of difficulty. Mary Ann never responded either to emails or to SMS.

Naomi finally reestablished contact sometime in 2015 as the marriage was ending. We never discussed what went wrong. She talked to me as she was entering Alcoholics Anonymous. My opinion had been that alcohol was a major contributing factor. The kind of man she met in bars were the kind of men who hang out in bars. They are not good marriage material. We could not talk about it, but I could express my belief that she was on the right path.

- Naomi cut me off again when I posted my reasons for getting divorced on my website. She got angry again over Christmas 2016 when I sent Christmas greetings by email to the family. These are only two incidents that I recall. Her anger arose often enough that I simply ignore them for the most part. Although she often indicates she would like me to change my behavior in some way, it is not clear what she wants and it is abundantly clear that nothing will ever satisfy her.
- The on-again off-again relationship went off for the last time in April 2017. She called by Skype and we had an hour-long conversation, at the end of which I mentioned that Oksana was pregnant with a daughter. I followed up the conversation with an email which she didn't answer. When Zoriana was born in September I sent a birth announcement and pictures. Naomi did not respond to that, or to a follow-up email.

That is where things stood at this writing. There never was enough of a stable relationship to allow me to rely on Naomi to take part in administering my estate or to handle any of the affairs of my new family.

Naomi died on February 26, 2023, in Massachusetts. I had not known she had moved there.

She died "suddenly" of a "cause unknown" at age 39. Her mother, the funeral home and the Massachusetts State Medical Examiner seemed intent on getting the medical examination done quickly and cremating the body.

The medical examiner attributed the death to "complications of alcoholism." I suspect there is more to the story. One dies of something brought on by "complications," not the complications themselves. She had no alcohol in her body when she died. She had a boyfriend at the time, and I believe she was working. She seems to have been far from a terminal alcoholic. The best guess of medical people who have seen the report is that she died of a heart condition brought on by the Covid vaccines.

Naomi Driving

Naomi turned 16 in December 1999 and started to learn to drive sometime thereafter. We had bought a 1998 Honda Accord with a standard transmission after the Lincoln was totaled. Naomi learned to drive in that car.

Like Jack, Naomi has little mechanical sense. She could not master the clutch or the manual shift. She invariably killed the engine when she tried to start from a dead stop, and very frequently missed her shifts. Very characteristically of Naomi, she blamed everything on the car and on my instruction, nothing on herself. She insisted that the car was defective. It did not work right. Her insistence was comical in light of the fact that everybody else in the family had no problem with it. I loved the car, and her mother used it as a commute car.

Naomi eventually got her license, after which she regularly had the use of the Honda. It kept having small unexplained problems. Things that ought to work stopped working. I forget what they were, but she always had an excuse. The most serious problem was one day I noticed as I walked outside that part of the skirting underneath the car was hanging down. Naomi had had the car the previous night. It was taped up in a fairly haphazard way. I confronted her. What had she done to the car? She lied boldly, directly, saying that she had no idea what it was. Eventually the truth came out. She was with some boy, and they had been driving in the fairly reckless way, and she tore the skirting off sliding down a dirt embankment.

Naomi's ineptitude in driving is certainly genetic. The vehemence with which she lied to her face is probably also somewhat genetic, but more than that, it is a character defect. She started lying at an early age. Since her mother not only believed her, but would strongly defend her against me and the babysitter, Lourdes, there was not much we could do. We knew she was lying, she knew we knew, and she was impregnable.

Suzy

Susy was born five years to the month after Naomi. She was the odd one out. Jack and Naomi were pretty good friends. They were an even pair. Girls are socially more precocious than boys, especially if the boy is a bit slow like Jack was. Both of the older children looked at Susy as an unwanted intrusion.

We moved to Mohican place shortly after Susy was born. She never had many playmates in the neighborhood. She had a few at St. Patrick's school. The ones I remember best were Arianna Huffington's girls Christina (today, an ex coke-head and lesbian) and Isabella. We had a couple of play dates at their house, though they never became close.

Susy enjoyed being with me, her father, until about the age of seven or eight. I had a tandem bicycle and she enjoyed riding on the back. She enjoyed, at least more than the other children, walking through the neighborhood and through the woods.

Vacations are a good barometer for measuring the development of the children and their relationships with her father. They come at measured intervals and they tend to stick out in memory more than everyday life.

We took our first foreign vacation in 1991, when Susy was only two years old, to British Columbia. Our next was to Germany in 1992. Then we went to London in 1996 to see our former au pair Natalie. Susy loved Natalie and so far as I can remember she was no more than an eager, curious eight-year-old.

In December 1996, as I recall, we took a packaged Apple vacation to Puerto Vallarta Mexico. Inasmuch as it was all-inclusive, we had really nothing to do. This highlighted the differences in outlook among the members of the family. Mary Ann, Jack and Naomi had a kind of an entitlement mentality. They felt entitled to do nothing, and that is what they did. They simply laid on the beach soaking up sun tans. Susy and I wanted adventure. Among other things we took a two man sea kayak and cruised around the mangroves, trying to spot Marine iguanas sunning themselves just above the water. With Susy on the handlebars, we took a bicycle for a ride around the neighborhood during which we encountered a Mexican guy with some coconuts. After brief conversation I got him to cut one open with his machete and Susy tried coconut milk. To the best of my recollection we got along just fine.

In 1997 we went to California to see my parents and then to New York City with our au pair Maren. Again, my recollection is that Susy loved the hot tubs and there was nothing out of the ordinary in her behavior. The memory that stands out most in my mind is that Princess Diana died while we were in New York and the whole family, with the exception of me, was glued to the television. I was always the exception in this regard. Once I had the information that "Princess Diana has died" I knew all that I needed to know and wanted to get on with life.

For Christmas of 1997 we went to Costa Rica, to a resort on the Nicoya peninsula called Tango Mar. As in Puerto Vallarta, Mary Ann and the children pretty much confined themselves to the beach in front of the hotel, soaking up the sun. The surf was quite gentle. Mary Ann cannot swim well and I offered to help her. She is a fearful woman, and not very trusting. She was afraid of the water, and she also seemed to be afraid that I would let her drown. Susy and I went exploring down the beach toward the next settlement, Montezuma, but in my cloudy memory I seem to recall that she was tending more and more to hang with her mother and siblings. On this vacation we went horseback riding, visited hot Springs, rode zip lines and visited volcanoes. So far as I recall Susy enjoyed it all.

The vacation in Tango Mar was so successful that we did it again the next year. This time we rented a four-wheel-drive and pretty much stayed on the peninsula. My recollection is that I spent more time by myself as the rest of the family hung out on the beach.

We went skiing in Montréal, to Mont Tremblant, in the spring of 1999. Jack was an avid snowboarder. Susy and I skied – the weather was beautiful – although I do not remember that she was especially enthusiastic. Naomi and Mary Ann were not interested in skiing and stayed in Montréal.

Just about every summer throughout this period we rented beach houses along the Delaware coast. Jack and Naomi learned how to bicycle. Susy was never interested. We never did anything particularly adventuresome as a family. We always took bicycles, and I would go often bicycle by myself. The longest such trip was up to Dover Delaware. It is memorable because some woman hit my bicycle when I was returning and I broke my thumb.

So what can I conclude from our vacations as a family of five, until Susy was about the age of 12? Basically it seemed like a normal family, although the children's lack of a spirit of adventure became more and more clear as time went on.

Susy entered St. Andrew's school in 1995 at the age of 12. Like her sister Naomi she became interested in dance. Debbie Kantor was a particularly charismatic dance teacher.

At her mother's insistence, Susy started taking birth control pills when she was about 14. Mary Ann insisted that taking these artificial hormones was the best way to fight Susy's incipient acne. She made the point repeatedly and strongly, even though I never offered an opinion. Mary Ann certainly intuited what my opinion would have been, had I expressed it, and she wanted to make sure that it was not even brought up. This was about the time in Susy's life when it was increasingly clear that I was a minority of one within the family. She was embarking on bellydancing, starting to spout social justice nonsense about the patriarchy and so on, and the Planned Parenthood party line on fertility and sexuality fit right in.

Mary Ann had not been concerned about Naomi's sexuality. She was very concerned about appearances, and would absolutely not have wanted an illegitimate child or an abortion, but she was not terribly concerned about the psychological effects of our daughters becoming promiscuous. Mary Ann herself is not highly sexed; moral considerations did not guide the fact that promiscuity was not a question in her life. She had had only one partner, a longtime affair with a guy named Louis Jack, whom in retrospect it appears that she did not love but simply regarded as a convenience.

Susy was always quite a solipsist. She was very self-assured, very dogmatic. When she was younger I found this quality really is engaging. It is easy to talk when children are interested in the subject. However, as she got older she became less amenable to discussion and more inclined to simply lecture me on whatever truths she supposed she had learned. She was taken in hook, line and sinker by the progressive teaching in her schools. Whether she was taught to hate her father, or simply learned that it was good form to do so, she tuned me out.

Susy did not spend much time with me during the school year. She had her friends, her music devices and her television to occupy her. We did, however, have two foreign vacations together.

In 2013, when Susy was 14 years old, we went on a one week mission to Haiti with the Episcopal Church. We were there in support of a long-standing relationship with a sister parish, St. Etienne. At this time Susy was no longer active in the church, but she had recently graduated from St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School and still had friends there. I was interested in the churches mission. I like to travel and I had never been to Haiti. The trip was so interesting that I wrote up a [monograph](#) summarizing the experience.

The 25 of us all slept on the floor of the church. Two or three members of the local parish served as guardians, protecting our stuff. There was no privacy.

The rector of St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, Betty McWhorter, led our contingent. With her was Sandy Chamblee, an elegant café au lait lady lawyer from the parish. Sandy had some time earlier divorced another lawyer named Pinckney. They had adopted a mulatto child, Ryan, about 16 years old, who accompanied Sandy on the trip.

Ryan was described as "a handful." He had a reputation for constantly getting into trouble. I do not remember if he attended St. Patrick's Day School. He may have, and he may have gotten thrown out. At any rate all of the adults knew him by reputation before the trip.

Ryan took a fancy to Susy, which Susy reciprocated. It was a very uncomfortable situation for the church ladies. They knew it was wrong. This was a bad boy and Susy should have nothing to

do with him. However, to say anything would have raised the question of racial prejudice. I was in the same bind, even more so in as much as I was known to be a political conservative. Anything I said would have been interpreted the wrong way.

Susy and Ryan snuck off here and there and made out. I think Susy had hickeys on her face – I don't remember. So far as I know this was the first time she had experienced anything like puppy love. I reflected on the fact that there was no privacy whatsoever in the church where we were staying, and that it was well known that there were tarantulas out in the woods and there wasn't that much privacy there in any case. I didn't think Susy could get into too much trouble. I was amused that none of the church ladies dared to bring the subject up to me. They must've fought some interesting internal battles, between their gut instinct is women and the thick mantle of liberalism they all wore.

Why did Susy do it? Among other things, I think she did it to rub my face and the fact that she could. She had already won that battle long time ago, but I think she continued to savor her victory. I represented everything traditional, the things that she had been taught to despise.

Like almost every high school child in America, Susy had a community service requirement. She had to demonstrate she was a responsible citizen by doing something to make the world a better place. Predictably, there was a major industry of companies that would find volunteer gigs for such kids in places that were interesting to travel, not too demanding as far as work goes, and could be kept almost as safe as an American suburb. Susy chose to go to Peru to work with some Catholic charities for two weeks in the summer of 2005, when she was 16.

Susy was not interested in spending time with me, but she couldn't make the trip without me. After some serious bargaining she agreed to spend a weekend with me in Cuzco, the former seat of the Inca Empire up in the Andes Mountains. We wanted to see Machu Picchu but we had not booked tickets in advance. The local guy who helped us look for tickets was really a delightful character. He and I conversed easily in Spanish, and his English was good enough that Susy was able to follow along despite her significantly weaker commander Spanish. He suggested that the Sacred Valley would be just as interesting as Machu Picchu. He could drive us.

We certainly got our money's worth. We saw some incredibly skillfully crafted stone buildings the Incas had made. We hiked along a ridge dividing the Pacific watershed from the Atlantic watershed, paralleling the Urubamba River way below us. I bought some coca leaf from an Indian so Susy could try it. I was sure she already knew what marijuana was, and I knew that the coca leaf would be only a mild stimulant if she could handle it, but probably so bitter she would spit it out. That was exactly what happened.

We then went to Lima to spend our two weeks. Suzy stayed as far from me as she could. We ate at long tables, and she invariably chose the opposite end. They would have a carafe of wine with dinner. She would pour herself a little bit and glance my way to see what the reaction was. My attitude was that wine was the least of my worries. A 16-year-old should know something about alcohol, and this was as good a place to find out as any.

Our work, if you can call it that, was to spend time with Indian children who had been driven out of the mountains by the Shining Path guerrilla movement. We were supposedly helping them do crafts and learn English. The fact was that the staff from the local Catholic diocese did an excellent job and we were superfluous.

We went out various places for dinner, among which was a shopping center called Larco Mar in a part of town called Miraflores, on cliffs overlooking the Pacific. There was an amusement park and a number of restaurants.

We took taxis as we traveled around town. I usually did the negotiation since I had the best Spanish, but Suzy is nothing if not brassy. One time she considered that I had not gotten the best possible price from a taxi and she argued him down by about 50¢. She was smug, and what could I say? I was impressed at what she had done with her limited Spanish.

We did not work on the weekend. Suzy stayed with her friends and I occupied myself talking with the adults and reading. Sometime on Saturday afternoon I started looking for Suzy. I could not find her. I was not terribly concerned at first, but became more so as it got on toward evening. Finally she showed up.

It turns out that she had taken a taxi all by herself back to Larco Mar. Once there, however, she realized that she did not know how to tell a new taxi driver to get back. It was about 6 km away – 4 miles. Lima is a city of several million people. Once again, she succeeded by sheer brass and bravado. She got in a taxi and had him drive all over the city until she recognized something and was able to get back to where we were staying. It was a reckless, stupid thing to have done, but she got away with it. That was the story of Susy's life.

Once she argued strongly that the patriarchy is evil. Men beat their wives. I challenged her. Did I beat her mother? No. Did either grandfather beat either grandmother? No. In fact, the women seemed to dominate. Did any uncles beat her aunts? Again, no. Could she name anybody she knew who beat their wife? No. Nonetheless, she clung adamantly to her argument. It is a tenet of the cultural Marxist religion, and she would not abandon it.

Suzy very strongly accused her brother Jack of some kind of vile sexual misconduct. Characteristically for this family, however heinous it may have been, neither Mary Ann nor Suzy

ever told me any details. Jack likewise did not, nor did I ask. They did not call in any sort of therapist. This leads me to believe that it was probably nothing more than Jack seeing her naked.

Over the next two years Susy changed rather radically. She progressed from dancing at St. Andrew's to joining a belly dance troupe of older women. Her mother supported the idea strongly. It struck me as a terrible idea, but there was no easy way for me to oppose it. I wound up driving her to rehearsals. More than that, I was dragooned into attending performances that seem to me wildly inappropriate for a 14 or 15-year-old. I did my best to simply avoid them. I did not want to brand myself as an old fogey.

Her fellow dancers had all had negative experiences with men. They spouted the party line that belly dancing has nothing to do with teasing men – an obvious lie, but a lie that one must let lie. Susy learned that men were no good, not to be trusted. This only reinforced what she had heard in school about the patriarchy. As I drove her to school we would have discussions about the way white men had treated Indians on the trail of tears, Japanese in Manzanar, and so on. She simply wanted to lecture me. She was not interested in any real learning. The discussions became increasingly uncomfortable.

Susy became a Social Justice Warrior before the term had come into currency. Though heterosexual as far as I know to this day, she was the head of the Walt Whitman high school GLBT club. She depreciated white people and men. Though we did not talk much about race, she was well aware that I was a race realist. I believe that the observed differences among the races represent real, intrinsic differences rather than the result of invisible prejudice.

Susy took to cursing me to my face. She realized that without support from her mother I was powerless to do anything about it, and her mother would stand there impassively as Susy did so. I took to simply walking away. It was after one particular impressive stream of vituperation in October, 2006, the beginning of her senior year, that I resolved to get divorced.

I had very little to do with Susy when she was in college. I had set up a trust fund to pay for the children's college, and she chose to go to Trinity College, Dublin. I do not know what her SAT scores were, but they must have been relatively good. The last I talked to her was during a two-week visit she made to Oksana and me ending on New Year's Eve 2009. As I understand it, she graduated from college in philosophy in 2011 and moved to Sweden with her boyfriend. Though they broke up, she has stayed there. She is sharing an apartment in the predominantly Muslim Husby section of Stockholm. I think she is doing some form of social work with immigrants.

When Naomi and I were still talking, during the first few months of 2017, she told me that she rarely talked to Suzy. Her mom had the most frequent contact, and it wasn't much.

Susy Driving

The remarkable thing about Susy is that she refused first to learn to ride a bicycle, then to learn to drive a car. I do not remember what excuses she offered for refusing to learn bicycling, but there were many. The car was simple: cars pollute and ruin our planet. She did not want to participate. She was not shy, however, about asking to be driven places. The argument that having her parents drive her to school involved two trips instead of one had absolutely no impact. Likewise, she furiously resisted the observation that she could benefit by walking a mile and a half to sport club for a workout rather than being driven. Her hypocrisy was clear to the rest of the family, but she remained absolutely oblivious. Talking about her, we agreed that Susy was the center of her own universe. To disagree with her, I quipped, was "a crime against Suzannity." She took those very seriously.

I suspect that Susy learned how to bicycle while she was at Trinity College, Dublin. It would've been absolutely the best way to get around. I suspect as well that she has never learned how to drive. Public transportation is quite good in Stockholm, and to the best of my knowledge she simply does not have the money for a car.

Mary Ann

Children inherit personality traits from their parents. It's one of the advantages of having natural children; they are easier to understand than adoptive because they are to a larger extent copies of their parents. It is worth making an inventory of personality traits of both parents.

On the standard OCEAN personality assessment, Mary Ann would rank more or less as follows:

Openness – low

Conscientiousness – very high

Extroversion – low

Agreeableness – middle to high

Neuroticism – high

Conscientiousness is her best quality. It enabled Mary Ann to maximize her success at school and in her career. Personality qualities are about 50% heritable. Aspects of Mary Ann's personality show up in our children.

Mary Ann's mother was a war bride from Nagoya, Japan. Her father, John McCleary, was stationed there with the Navy during the Korean War. He ran an enlisted men's club. The Japanese employee who handled the day-to-day operations was a fellow named Saito. He could see that John was a friendly, honest but naïve young man. He arranged for John to meet his sister Fusako. The two of them married. It gave John a strong woman to run his life and it gave Fusako, known to the family as "Slim," a ticket out of war-ravaged Japan.

John came from an undistinguished lineage in Fishtown, Philadelphia, featured in Charles Murray's "Coming Apart" as a typical lower class white neighborhood. John's father John was a rather undependable sort, a charming Irish storyteller who made money by a number of small schemes. Of his mother Agnes I know almost nothing. John was steadier, more honest but no brighter than his parents. He spent his career at the Frankford Arsenal in Philadelphia working in heating and air conditioning. He loved his kids, and they loved him in turn. He had a warmth that their mother totally lacked. John had no intellectual interests or ambitions. His chief satisfactions and wife were fishing and television. Though he worked with his hands, neither his house nor his vehicle was much of a showplace of mechanical talent.

Slim's family was more distinguished. Her mother Nao was a nationally recognized shamisen player. Slim was raised more by her grandmother than her mother. As the eldest daughter she also had a lot of responsibility for raising her three younger half-siblings. We know nothing about Slim's father. He is rumored to have been the mayor of Nagoya during the war. Slim and her family simply never talked about him to anybody.

Slim worked at very ordinary jobs, the school cafeteria and a light bulb factory. She was conscientious in raising her four children. Moreover, there has to have been a genetic endowment of intelligence somewhere. The oldest son John is a professor of mathematics at Vassar. Mary Ann got a Masters in computer science from American University with a very high grade point average. She is successful as one of four founding partners of a consulting firm. Her next younger sister Denise is a well-recognized math teacher in the Denver Public schools, and the youngest, Rose, is a PhD in psychology at Cal State, Bakersfield. All of them owe a certain measure of their success to the Japanese work ethic, but without intelligence it would not have worked. There is scant evidence that the intelligence would have come from the McCleary side of the family; it has to of been the Japanese.

Anger runs deep in Mary Ann's family. Mary Ann's grandmother Nao, the recognized musician, was by all accounts a harsh and angry lady. Mary Ann's mother Fusako was the second of two children by the unidentified grandfather. She too was quite strict in raising her children. It succeeded with her four natural children. She expressed her anger to keep them in line. They grew up to be diligent students and successful in their careers. The eldest, John, and the third, Denise, succeeded as well in their first marriages. The same might be said of Mary Ann – our marriage lasted 25 years. The youngest, Rose, has been married three times.

There were strains within the Saito family in Japan. Fusako's older brother had a mistress about whom everybody knew but nobody talked. The youngest half-brother Mutozo was estranged from the family for a number of years.

Mary Ann's sister Denise got pregnant with a child, Shawn, when she was away at college in Western Pennsylvania. She hid the pregnancy from her parents until the sixth or seventh month. Denise did not want to marry the father, Kim. John McCleary was a confirmed Catholic. He insisted that he and Slim would raise the child. This is the only instance I can think of in which John expressed a strong opinion and carried the day. Denise did not talk to her mother for several years after the child was born, and the relationship was never again close.

Slim did not ask for or take well to the task of raising the grandchild. I never saw her show any expression of love for any of her children, but most especially not for Shawn. She was quite strict. She and Shawn argued quite a bit. Shawn's temper was out of control. She yelled at everybody, including Mary Ann and me, with such violence that we were literally shaken. We couldn't cope with it. Shawn had no particular reason to be angry with us, but she disliked both of her aunts. She never had anything to do with her natural mother. She cut off communication with the entire family immediately after her grandfather's funeral in 2005.

Mary Ann and I never had shouting fights. She would get supremely angry about one thing or another and simply freeze me out for a period of a couple of weeks. I was often left to guess what the problem was. We never resolve our issues even though we frequently went to a marriage counselor, usually the same guy, Dale Ostrander. Mary Ann could simply never acknowledge the problems nor talk about how to avoid them. We would get back together and continue to ignore them. They did not go away. Angry silence remained her chief weapon. It was not a very effective one; I often did not even know what she wanted me to change.

Mary Ann attempted to control me in several ways. She thought that my singing was terrible. Early in the marriage, when we still attended church, she told me not to sing as we were sitting in the pews. She likewise had no sense of humor and did not appreciate my attempts to make a joke. She told me not to try. I note with wry pleasure that I learned to sing despite her, joining the church choir late in the marriage, and now love giving humorous speeches at Toastmasters.

Mary Ann was generally not comfortable around other people. We almost never had my work colleagues over to the house. The few with whom she formed friendships, including Edith Purdie and Susan Jacox, were parents of children of similar ages to ours. She developed closer personal friendships with these women than I had had professional friendships. Since the divorce neither of these friends talk to me.

We did almost nothing together. Mary Ann was not interested in my professional life, my participation in the boards of the private schools of the children attended, church or the sports that interested me such as bicycling and boating. Her life was rather more constrained and her interest more private. She gardened and played the piano.

Graham

I would assess my own personality as follows:

- Openness – high
- Conscientiousness – middle to high
- Extroversion – middle
- Agreeableness – high
- Neuroticism – low

Both sides of my family display a Puritan work ethic. They were for the most part responsible citizens. The major weakness was for alcohol. My father's mother and father both drank quite heavily. So far as I know it didn't have any real effect on them. My father likewise would drink about 400 ml. a day of hard spirits, yet he never experienced difficulties at work, in driving, or in personal relationships.

The exception was my father's brother Arthur. He was an alcoholic, committing suicide in 1964 at the age of 48. He also argued with dogmatic certainty on a number of topics. He was an ardent Democrat, antigovernment, and would talk you to death. Although he did not live to this meet his grandsons, two of them share this trait. I think it is isolated to that side of the family. I do not feel it in myself, nor do I see it in my brother or sister. Nonetheless, something similar does show up in my children by Mary Ann. They hold tenaciously to unexamined views that they have absorbed from their environment.

I note also that Naomi has had difficulties with alcohol. She recognized the problem and quit drinking sometime toward the end of 2015. Around summer of 2016 she also quit smoking. Both of these decisions are a testament to the strength of her willpower. In these two instances, after long denying the problems, she finally acknowledged that a change was needed and she was able to make it. In this she may also take after me. After innumerable false starts I quit smoking on my 21st birthday. My two pack a day habit was literally killing me. Much more recently, just before the birth of my youngest daughter Zoriana, I quit drinking. It had never had adverse social consequences, but it was clearly threatening the health of my digestive tract.

My mother was not close to her family. She disliked her stern father, a successful orthopaedic surgeon. Her mother might have been a livelier soul, but grandfather was such a strict Presbyterian that she, like my mother, was discouraged from having fun. My mother's three siblings grew up to be sober, respectable, responsible citizens. Her two older sisters did not marry, and my mother says her father was not at all enthusiastic about her choice of a husband.

The Children's Genetic Inheritance

With regard to the OCEAN suite of personality traits, none of these three children are especially **open**. They do not accept advice well. They do not easily entertain new ideas or new people. Jack and Susy have quite constrained circles of friends. Naomi is the exception; she has always had quite a few friends, although my observation from afar is that she has lost a number of friendships over questions of drinking and so on.

Naomi is the only child to have inherited a strong stripe of her mother's **conscientiousness**. Mary Ann is extremely diligent at work, sticking with the project until it is done and done properly. The evidence is that Naomi is appreciated at work because she is likewise conscientious. She claims that her job is to keep the PhD's in line, keeping them grounded in reality and making sure that business gets done. Jack, on the other hand, appears not to be conscientious. The most recent problem I recall was trying to explain why he, a drug counselor, tested positive for marijuana. He seems not to be dedicated to any particular job, not interested whatsoever in building a career. I have heard no feedback whatsoever about Susy. I can only infer from the fact that she has chosen to share a four-person apartment in the Muslim quarter of Stockholm that she doesn't have a great deal of money. While I am certain that she would explain it by her strong commitment to Social Justice Warrior values, she probably resists keeping her nose to the grindstone and doing what it would take to become success.

Mary Ann keeps a clean house, a clean garden and dresses neatly. I cannot see that any of the children inherited these qualities. As children they were excused from such responsibilities – the housekeepers cleaned their rooms and did the laundry. Their apartments, the little I have seen of them, have been atrocious messes. None of the children pay any particular attention to their appearance.

None of the children are very **extroverted**. Again, Naomi is more so than the other two. I do not know of them joining any social organizations. Unusual for children of their generation, Jack and Susy have not been very active in social media. Naomi is. During the brief window of time in which she admitted me as a Facebook friend she made quite a few posts. Naomi dated somewhat in high school. Jack did not. Susy had one boyfriend, Aidan.

Agreeableness is not a characteristic that any of the children inherited. Perhaps they simply learned that they could usually get their own way by being obstinate. In any case, they refused to take advice or accept help from their parents on homework. They generally refused to help around the house. If they were more agreeable in other contexts, I do not know of it.

Lastly, the children, like their mother, all display a fairly high level of **neuroticism**. Wikipedia defines it thusly: "*Neuroticism is one of the Big Five higher-order personality traits in the study of psychology. Individuals who score high on neuroticism are more likely than average to be moody and to experience such feelings as anxiety, worry, fear, anger, frustration, envy, jealousy,*

guilt, depressed mood, and loneliness. People who are neurotic respond worse to stressors and are more likely to interpret ordinary situations as threatening and minor frustrations as hopelessly difficult. They are often self-conscious and shy, and they may have trouble controlling urges and delaying gratification. People with high neuroticism indexes are at risk for the development and onset of common mental disorders, such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and substance use disorder, symptoms of which had traditionally been called neuroses."

Their most striking manifestation of neuroticism is anger. All three children feel that they have a right to be angry and to engage in uncontrolled emotional outbursts. In this all of them exceed their mother. Mary Ann may seethe inwardly, but she usually keeps a calm exterior. The children have never learned that level of self-control. They will shout at you to your face.

Each of us is born with our own inventory of personality traits. Part of the process of socializing the child, and part of the child's own process of character development, is to learn self-mastery. My children were not encouraged to do so by the schools, the therapists, or their mother. They did not learn self-mastery. They did not develop good character.

It is worth noting that my young son Eddie is old enough to assess by these measures. I would give him the same assessment I give myself, with the exception that he is more extroverted. He is very agreeable and not at all neurotic. An easy child to live with.

Race

Mary Ann and I both grew up before the civil rights era in thousand square-foot houses in white working class suburbs. The places we lived were too poor to have Jews and too rich to have Blacks. Diversity in my neighborhood was represented by the Baptist-run Chung Mei home for Chinese were orphans. In Mary Ann's neighborhood it was represented by her Japanese mother.

The prevailing attitudes about race were those that had held sway since Herodotus' time and were consistent with the thoughts expressed by America's founding fathers, Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain and H.L. Mencken. I and my friends regarded the Chinese as pretty smart. Mary Ann certainly recognized that she and her siblings were a bit smarter than the other kids in the neighborhood. Moreover, they had different values: they worked hard.

Mary Ann's Childhood

Mary Ann experienced some prejudice as a child. Her mother was not an outgoing woman and did not develop friendships in the neighborhood. Her father's extended family did not warm up to

Slim. Slim did not have too much use for John's father whom she called by the name of an old Japanese Emperor, Tokugawa or something for his dictatorial ways.

Mary Ann encountered some racism as well in the Catholic schools she attended. She countered it in the usual way: don't fight it, simply show them that you are better. It worked for the four siblings. They were always at the top of their classes. All four developed a significant number of friendships. While there may have been prejudice against them, it was not insurmountable.

Although there were a number of Blacks in Philadelphia, Mary Ann never mentioned that any attended Catholic schools. Presumably some did, and presumably again because their parents wanted a good education for them. I doubt that Mary Ann herself had any run-ins with them, though I am equally sure that she was aware of the general prejudices about them that her father's Fishtown family would have held. Japanese, though they are to discreet to voice them, usually harbor prejudices that are at least as strong.

Graham's Childhood

My mother had always been fond of Japanese and Chinese. My parents got along well with the next-door neighbors where I lived up to the age of seven in Berkeley, the Yings. I simply did not encounter many Black people until I entered junior high school at the age of ten. The catchment area for Portola Junior High School included a portion of the city of Richmond to which a good many Blacks had immigrated during the war to work in the shipyards. After the war they remained living in the so-called temporary buildings that were to stand for another 20 years or

I observed that the Black students were seldom in my classes. They hung around together and were generally louder and less disciplined than the other kids. One kid, Lonnie, would ask me for my milk money. I don't know if there was a threat behind it or not, but I give it to him – all of four cents. There were not any fights based on race, and it would have been simply poor manners to call people by racial epithets. We told Polish jokes unselfconsciously, not knowing any Poles or that some of the kids around us must have been of Polish extraction.

At the time of our marriage

Shortly after we met in 1979, Mary Ann recounted an experience she had walking down the street to her welfare agency client in downtown Baltimore. It revealed that she was very much a product of working class Croydon, Pennsylvania. A black guy made a lewd catcall to her. She yelled back "F**k you, N****r" from a safe distance. At that point in time, even though Mary Ann and I had both been subjected to a decade and a half of Goodthink on the topic of race, our outlooks remained fairly consistent with those of our childhood. I worked alongside black professionals, each of whom I judged as an individual and some of whom were quite talented. I also worked with Japanese, Chinese, Hispanics, Jews and Muslims. I observed differences

among them and, in the manner of Mark Twain or H. L. Mencken, was not particularly reluctant to voice my observations. During my brief stints as a surveyor and in the Army I had made an effort to get to know some Black guys. It had been easier in the early 1960s, before civil rights made it into a big deal.

Our Children

Our children grew up in affluent neighborhoods. There were quite a few Jews, no Blacks that I remember, and relatively few Asians. St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School and later, and to a somewhat lesser extent, St. Andrews School emphasized diversity. In practice diversity meant Black. St. Patrick's wanted to be sure that every school photograph included a representative number of black faces.

St. Patrick's church had a few black parishioners and some with mixed race children. Those kids were like gold – black faces with white personalities. The school made very sure that all of them got enrolled. I do not recall any exceptional scholars among them, but most of them got along well with their classmates. The exception that sticks in my mind is one black boy that had been adopted by black professionals. To the consternation of his adoptive parents, his temperament reflected his birth parents.

St. Patrick's cast its nets far and wide to fill the diversity quota. Its geography on the ironically named Whitehaven Parkway worked against it. It was a long way from where black families lived. Even though the school offered full tuition scholarships, it took a dedicated parent to commit to getting the child across town to school. Moreover, it took an adventuresome child to want to immerse himself in a school full of upper-middle-class white children.

Mary Ann and my children are one quarter Japanese. Although the school never made an issue of their race, I am sure that for the purposes of diversity they were pleased to have additional kids that were not purebred Caucasian. Photographic diversity also benefited from the smattering of Asians and Hispanics that had been adopted into white families.

Our children picked up at an early age on the concern with racial issues in the society around them. The white people who ran the church and the school taught them that white people had a history of racism and still, in large numbers, harbored racist views. Mary Ann, of mixed-race herself, grew up as a dedicated Democrat and soon learned to sound like the upper-middle-class liberals that surrounded her. She could not be identified with the evil white man.

I, the father, was another story. I asked embarrassing questions. Why did the church want to disinvest from IBM, when IBM in South Africa had such enlightened policies on race? Why did the church make such a big issue out of looking for Black parishioners when there were so many more lapsed Jews in the neighborhood who might be enticed to join us? Why did they allow the situation in which the children admitted on the basis of diversity were so obviously much poorer

at school work than the white kids? Wouldn't that simply perpetuate stereotypes in their minds? Why did their history teachers harp on American slavery rather than world slavery? Virtually every society in history had practiced it. What made America unique was that we had had the courage to end it. My children did not want to discuss these things. They simply concluded that their father was a racist and that it was not worth discussing the issues.

Naomi recently told me that Asian/Caucasian mixed-race people call themselves "mixers." They share a number of perspectives and concerns peculiar to themselves. My expectation had been, in marrying Mary Ann, that our children would get the best of both worlds. They would inherit intelligence and conscientiousness from their mother, and extraversion and drive for me. I would have expected that that would be true of most mixers. As noted above in the section entitled Genetic Factors, this seems not to have been the case with my children.

There are quite a few mixed-race people in American society. High-profile families that pop immediately to mind include tiger mom Amy Chua and Jeb Rubinfeld, Mark Zuckerberg and John Derbyshire. Nonetheless, I cannot think of, nor can Google locate, a single mixer who has achieved true prominence in business or politics. That would be an interesting research question: does the Asian/Caucasian mix result in hybrid vigor, or the opposite? I am sure that researchers the world over are dying not to find out. It would be an explosive subject.

However the genetics played out, my children's mixed-race heritage combined with the anti-white messages with which they were bombarded in school and society probably played a role in turning them against me. Just as Barack Obama fails to credit the white side of his family to any extent for his success, my children may be finding it expedient to write their white father out of their lives.

Sports and Exercise

Mary Ann is not a natural athlete. She never participated in any team sport. She runs to stay in shape, but does not push herself. I was born with the same natural disinclination. I forced myself to overcome it, starting to run seriously in my mid-20s, continuing with bicycling when my knees gave out in my mid-40s, and continuing with weight training and an exercise bicycle into my 70s. The children were born without any natural endowment of athletic ability: neither strength, nor coordination, nor desire.

All three children joined the Mohican Hill Swimming Pool in Bethesda in 1991. The idea was to give them some exercise and let them meet the neighborhood children. As far as exercise goes, the children each chose to take the easy path: diving rather than swimming. To me, diving made no sense. One experiences almost no physical exertion in diving. They were not very serious about it in any case.

Nevertheless, we parents were required to show up and cheer them on at the practice and the meets. I was not enthusiastic and left most of that to Mary Ann. The other theory was that the children would meet other kids and make friends. It happened to only a limited degree. I do not recall the Jack made any friends at the Mohican Pool. Being on the swim team involved a lot of the same kind of automobile transport that characterized the rest of their lives. They were always being driven here and there to some swim meet where they would compete. I do not recall that any of the children ever distinguished themselves in diving.

About the same time, they learned how to bicycle. Naomi learned quite quickly, at Dewey Beach over summer. I think Jack had also learned at the beach. However, Mohican Hills was too hilly and there were simply too few roads to bicycle on. Moreover, there was no place to go. The big streets were too busy to allow children on bicycles, and the major shopping center was two miles away, even the minor one was the best part of one mile.

I took Jack on bicycle vacations in each of the years 1995-97, first to Prince Edward Island, then the Bay of Fundy side of Nova Scotia, then the Atlantic side. Naomi accompanied us on the last of them. The kids loved the adventure and the food. They were not excited about the exercise. Naomi rode with me on the back of a tandem, letting me do most of the work. As mentioned elsewhere, Jack made a one-day ride of 75 miles the first year and then the next two years steadfastly refused to try to improve on that figure. In life he seeks ways to fail, and finds them.

Naomi and Suzy started to dance as middle school students at St. Andrews School. They had an inspiring teacher, Debbie Kantor. Each of them danced for two or three years. Though I do not recall that they had leading roles, their mother was pleased with their success.

It has been six years since I have seen any of the children. Things may have changed, but from what I recall, and the little I have seen in photographs, they all appear a bit heavy and out of shape. I doubt that exercise is part of their regimens.

Jack's unwillingness to put his body in shape by riding a bicycle was a matter of will. He successfully defied almost every attempt to get him to improve himself. He refused to learn how to swim. To the best of my recollection he never even tried to run. And, on the occasions when I went bicycling with him, he never exerted himself to the extent of working up a sweat. The only sports that he really seemed to enjoy were downhill: snowboarding and mountain biking. In both situations he was able to ride a ski lift to the summit. I cannot judge whether he was any good at these sports. He certainly never chose to compete.

Schools

We were involved in schooling from the time Jack entered nursery school in 1986 until Suzy graduated in 2007. A lot has been written about the school experiences of millennial children. So far as I can see, most of it applies to our children.

Opting for Church Schools

All three children attended nursery school at St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School. Jack went on to graduate from the sixth grade at St. Patrick's and then to St. Andrews Episcopal Day School, graduating in 2001. Naomi attended the local public school, Wood Acres, from the first to the fifth grade, at which point she joined Jack at St. Andrews Episcopal day school from which she graduated in 2002. Susy attended St. Patrick's through the sixth grade and then went to St. Andrews through the eighth grade. She then attended the public Walt Whitman High School through graduation in 2007.

As a child in California I had attended a Swedenborgian Church from the ages of about eight until fifteen. My beliefs were similar to those of my father. Although he was a dedicated agnostic, he believed that the church filled a useful social role. He was happy to take leadership roles.

I joined the Episcopal Church shortly after my first divorce when I was stationed in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1974-76. I was looking for the company of like-minded people, in particular a wife. In Washington I attended St. Albans Episcopal Church and the National Cathedral before marrying Mary Ann. We as a family began to attend St. Patrick's Episcopal Church about 1983, shortly after Jack was born.

Mary Ann had been brought up as a Catholic, going to Catholic schools, going to catechism every Saturday and church every Sunday. Her Japanese mother didn't believe in any of it. Mary Ann put up with it, but never became a believer. She was not attending church when we met, though she was not averse to getting married in the Episcopal tradition. It has a comfortable similarity to the Roman Catholic tradition.

Mary Ann attended church with me less and less frequently after the children were born. Up until about 1991, when Jack would have been nine years old, I brought the children to Sunday school as I attended church. Mary Ann did not encourage their attendance, and as the children demonstrated increasing reluctance to go, they carried the day. Susy, the youngest, never did get much exposure to Sunday school. She did develop a certain closeness to Marjorie Gerbracht, the day school chaplain, though it never blossomed into an interest in religion.

I had favored enrolling the children in an Episcopal school to give them some grounding in morality and spirituality in relentlessly secular Washington DC. I also liked the fact that private schools are free to selectively admit students who will be able to do the work and to expel

children who misbehave. I also nurtured a hope that by assuming leadership roles in the schools I would develop some interesting friendships. Though none of my hopes were particularly well fulfilled, we could afford the private schools, and I could not imagine that it would be better in the public schools. Mary Ann often argued that we should put them in public schools simply because it would cost less money. As noted, her argument carried the day for Naomi in elementary school and Susy in high school.

St. Patrick's School

St. Patrick's was not terribly demanding. Jack and Naomi kept up with the assignments without asking for help; neither did the school suggest that they needed any from parents. The school was taken in by every educational fad of the age.

- Whole language is the idea that children learn to read by recognizing entire words rather than spelling them out. It is an idea with deep roots. Something similar influenced the "Dick and Jane," "Bill and Susan" books that I had as a first grader back in the late 40s.

The traditional point of view is that children learn to read by sounding things out. The sound the letters out and then make the word. This is the process our son Eddie is going through right now. It is a thrill to go through a Russian copy of the French Asterisk and Obelisk manga and watch him spell out each word. It is a natural process.

Part of the whole language dogma is that spelling doesn't matter. It is more important not to discourage the children or damage their self-esteem while they learn how to read. Unfortunately, my grown children did not learn to read very quickly. A book of any substance includes longer words, words that cannot easily be recognized at a glance. If you do not spell things out, you consign yourself permanently to a Dick and Jane level of reading.

I was new on the school board at the time the whole language concept was sprung on us. I did not realize that it was not new; it had been tried many times and failed. I did not know that it was part and parcel of a larger agenda pushed by progressives to water down education under the guise of reducing the stress on students. The upshot was that my three children did not learn how to read, write or spell very well.

- There is an ongoing debate about the degree of memorization that should be required of children. Multiplication tables are a case in point. The question is, why should a child have to learn that 5×9 is 45 when the calculator will do it for him? Long after my kids were out of elementary school, in 2006, I took a graduate course in math education at the University of Maryland where precisely this question was asked. We had a guest lecturer who advocated given kids calculators. Our entire class, mostly math teachers from public

schools, rose in rebellion. If the children do not learn their times tables they do not develop intuition in handling numbers. If they do not learn the fundamentals of arithmetic in the third and fourth grade, they do not have the foundation upon which to develop their skills with fractions and decimals, and later on, algebra and trigonometry.

St. Patrick's failure to ask the children to learn their times tables may have seemed like a kindness to the children. It was anything but. It was a copout. It spared the teachers the hard work of getting the students to do it, and it spared the school the difficult reality that children admitted under the rubric of diversity would not do it as well as the paying students.

Math manipulatives represented another part of the dumbing down of mathematics. It is true that helping the child visualize the process helps them to learn. Making three rows of four objects, and then counting them, is a good way of demonstrating that $3 \times 4 = 12$. However, the math manipulatives are not a substitute for absorbing the abstract fact that $3 \times 4 = 12$. It is far easier to extrapolate from the abstract as to why $3 \times 5 = 15$, $3 \times 6 = 18$ and so on, then continually counting. As in many things, the school made the process more infantile in order to supposedly make it easier. The result, however, was that the children did not become good at math. Moreover, it became harder to distinguish those who might have been good at math from those who would never be good at math. Muddying the waters might have been the objective.

- St. Patrick's prided itself on its art program, and touted its integrated curriculum. This is a good idea in principle. If a child is learning ratios in arithmetic, it is highly appropriate that he should be learning about levers in science class at the same time. Art, music and drama were mixed in with other subjects.

The music and drama instruction appear to have been quite good. The artwork that the children did in early elementary school was really impressive. Our children did not develop any skills that they carry with them today, but might have. It led to some fairly silly exercises. In the fourth grade, integrating art and history, Jack had to create a replica of Hadrian's Wall out of pebbles on a piece of board. He was supposed to do it himself, but as noted elsewhere he is not mechanically gifted and not particularly interested. We wound up doing it together. We learned virtually nothing from the exercise. I compare that exercise with my reading the French manga cartoon book Asterix and Obelix to my son Eddie this last week. Eddie had more fun and certainly learned vastly more about Romans than Jack did from the Hadrian's Wall exercise. All Jack and I managed to do was get glue all over ourselves, make a kind of sloppy wall, and share some satisfaction when it was over.

- Group learning was yet another fad at St. Patrick's. Observing that adults must work in teams and a corporate environment, supposedly experts in a school of education someplace decided that fourth and fifth graders should learn to study in teams. Jack was placed in a team of four kids. The parents were required to figure out how to get them together – kids were driven everywhere in those days, so there was a mother who could do the driving – and then they were supposed to work together on written assignments. Needless to say, they had no idea how to organize themselves, who would be in charge, or how to follow the leader's instructions if a leader actually emerged. It was chaos. The little boys simply goofed off.
- On the topic of boys, the 1990s marked the "War on Boys" written about by Kathleen Parker in the book by that title. Actually, it was cast the other way around. Books such as "Finding Ophelia" argued that teachers tended to overlook the girls and call on boys. The American Association of University Women, a hotbed of feminism, contended that girls were slighted. They needed more attention. Another part of the problem was competitive sports like dodgeball – boys were too aggressive. St. Patrick's bought the whole thing. We invited experts like the Sadkers, who made a fortune selling books describing the problem, to inform teachers how to further suppress boys in order that girls might rise. Anybody with any experience with elementary school kids knows that girls have always held their own against boys. They mature quicker, have better self-control, and are more intent on pleasing the teacher.

Part of the package was anti-bullying. St. Patrick's tolerated no bullying. We on the school board of course thought that was a good idea, but we didn't see how the policy was implemented. In retrospect I suspect that they simply prevented boys from being boys.

In one related incident, the headmaster attempted to fire a seasoned teacher named Barbara Maloney. The ostensible reason was that she had slapped a boy. He had acted up, and she sat next to him on a bench on the playground and talked rather sternly to him. The talk ended with her opening up the arms she had had folded across her chest and hitting him on the chest with the back of her hand to drive the point home. The kid's parents were not upset, but another teacher on the playground ratted her out. Barbara was not a particular friend of the administration because she did things her own way, including treating boys like boys and girls like girls. They tried to fire her. I rose to her defense, eventually persuading the chair of the school board that it would probably be illegal to fire her and it was the wrong thing to do in any case. He was a lawyer, and argued with me to the end, but inasmuch as we were fighting another case in which another teacher on the outs with the administration had been fired without adequate cause, I finally prevailed.

To this day Jack does not read or write with any great proficiency, nor does he know his times tables. In the years in which he should have been learning to apply himself he was subjected to educational fads and we parents were encouraged not to worry. So far as I know his intelligence is appropriate for a school like St. Patrick's. His college boards were in the 1300 range. He was admitted to Bates College, not a shabby school, as well as Humboldt State which he attended. He has simply never had much motivation to apply his intelligence to much of anything.

Probably not coincidentally, this was an era in which diversity was becoming a watchword in private schools. St. Patrick's was extremely intent on enrolling minority – read Black - students. The process by which they did so was as opaque as they could make it. I sat on the school board through most of the 1990s. I heard them boast of their successes in admitting diversity students. As a school treasurer I could see the impact; they allotted 10% of tuition income for financial aid. I never heard a word spoken about the qualifications of the students admitted under the program or their academic success once they were in. I draw the inference that academic standards were probably relaxed in order to accommodate the diversity admissions, none of whom struck any of us other parents as being especially promising.

Aside from talks about celebrating diversity, St. Patrick's School did not offer much in the way of moral education. The kids did not even learn the traditional Bible stories. The highlight of the church year seemed to be the Christmas pageant. The emphasis there was on performance, not on the story being told. There were Easter egg hunts but not a tremendous amount of talk about what Easter meant. Jack and Susy managed to get through St. Patrick's Episcopal day school without any significant knowledge of the Bible and without having been instructed in morals per se. The school enrolled upper-middle-class kids, most of whom were pretty well behaved, so discipline wasn't much of an issue. There were not any schoolyard fights that I knew about. Given the mixture of pretty nice kids and reasonably effective teachers not a whole lot went wrong.

When all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. The parents of St. Patrick School kids generally had money. Thus, every problem looked like something that money could solve. The administration the school was more than happy to subscribe to the theory. They had a school psychologist and lines to a great many experts in various fields. The parents were used to paying money to get their problem solved, and school was no exception.

The parents were by and large families of two professionals with demanding careers, with graduate and postgraduate degrees from prestigious universities. They lived in large single-family homes in the better neighborhoods of Northwest Washington DC and Bethesda Maryland. A good many had "Latin ladies" to take care of the children and clean the house. These are the

kind of nannies that caused problems for cabinet nominees Zoe Baird and Timothy Geithner. They employed the ladies but did not report their income or pay into Social Security for them.

With pedigrees like theirs, it is no wonder that these parents had reasonably intelligent children. There was a hierarchy of prestige among the private schools. At the pinnacle was Sidwell Friends, followed closely by National Cathedral School, St. Albans, Georgetown Day school, the Landon school, Georgetown visitation and a few others. Though still prestigious, St. Patrick's and St. Andrews fell in a little ways down the line. We chose St. Patrick's because we were parishioners and we had no particular standing among the Washington elite. We chose St. Andrews because Jack's academic record was not terribly strong and St. Andrews had a feeder school relationship with St. Patrick's. It certainly helped that I was on the board of St. Patrick's and an active Episcopalian. I later joined the board of St. Andrews.

It was not in the culture of these schools for the parents to be highly involved in the children's school work. Most of the children were bright enough not to need much help, and the parents did not have a great deal of time to offer it.

The schools seem to take the attitude that parents should stand back and leave education up to professional such as themselves. They certainly did not encourage parents to help children with homework. They were quite content that the parents show up and allow themselves to be impressed on back-to-school night.

My children did not want me to be involved much in their school work. They asked me questions off and on in the higher elementary grades. I naïvely mistook their questions for interest. If they asked me, for instance, who Alexander Hamilton was, I might have mentioned him in the context of Thomas Jefferson and the differences of opinion among the founding fathers. They would inevitably shut me up. They wanted a simple answer such as "shot by Aaron Burr" and nothing more. My children never displayed much intellectual curiosity. It's partly a matter of their personalities, but I have a feeling it was also the culture of the school. The children seem to have fairly early on developed a rather cynical attitude toward academics. They didn't want to actually learn anything; they just wanted to get it over with.

Naomi was the only child who hung out with the smarter kids. Some of her classmates from St. Andrews came close to 1600 on the college boards. Such friends sometimes came over to the house. My impression was that even these brightest of students were not terribly interested in the subject matter. There was a degree of cynicism about the whole process, one that is captured in a book about Walt Whitman High School, which Suzy attended, entitled "The Overachievers."

The ethos of the Washington area private schools owed much more to educational schools, from which our teachers had invariably graduated, than it did to anything religious. Schools of

education are relentlessly secular and politically progressive. They believe in the therapeutic model. If there is something wrong with the child, the problem should be fixed by competent experts. The idea that a child might be a moral agent, might develop character and take responsibility for his own actions, was foreign to them.

This is consistent with the self-esteem dogma that had taken hold in the schools. The idea was that a child might be discouraged because he didn't have adequate self-esteem, and that the right approach was to praise every child regardless of their abilities. This is now derided as the "special snowflake" theory. One manifestation was that if a child brought anybody a Valentine on Valentine's Day, they had to bring Valentines for every child in the class.

The children are not fooled. As Christakis writes in "The Importance of Being Little," the children know that Debbie's turkey looks better than Freddie's. If every child gets a gold star, gold stars mean nothing. The children simply learn that school work is mindless busywork, everybody will get an adequate grade, and only a fool would take it seriously.

St. Andrews School

Jack and Naomi entered St. Andrew's school in the same year, 1995, Naomi entered the sixth grade which was just starting up, Jack the seventh grade. Naomi had attended Wood Acres elementary school close to our house in Bethesda. It was free. I was not impressed with the administration, only somewhat impressed with a couple of the teachers. By 1995 money was not too much of an object and it seemed to me that the children were likely to get a better education in Episcopal schools. Having them in the same school would also be convenient, and I was invited to serve on the school board.

Naomi's experience in Wood Acres School was about the same as the kids at St. Patrick's. These were kids from a catchment area almost exclusively of large, single-family houses owned by professionals. There were no troublemakers. In fact, there were probably fewer. Wood Acres did not have a dedication to diversity, and to my knowledge no kids were bussed in. Whereas there was a big to-do in St. Patrick's when one of the diversity admission kids brought a pocket knife to school and showed it around, resulting in his eventual expulsion, I don't think anything as exciting ever happened at Wood Acres.

The children did have some favorite teachers. Suzy and Naomi both liked Debbie Cantor, who taught dance. Irene Walsh was universally recognized as an outstanding chemistry teacher. She served as Naomi's inspiration; Naomi is now working in the field of biochemistry.

On the other hand, the children did get quite a bit of progressive indoctrination. Naomi told me long after the fact that Glenn Whitman, the undersized teacher that everybody called Pee-Wee Herman, was an avid socialist and had taught them from Howard Zinn's "A People's History of

the United States." Neither my children nor my wife liked discussing politics with me. I simply knew too much. That notwithstanding, they stubbornly clung to their liberal views, as they do to this day.

Other Professionals

Professional parents involve their children with lots of other professionals. The schools have teachers, psychologists, guidance counsellors and others. The kids see all kinds of physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, sports trainers and others. They get tutored and helped with college admissions.

The therapists seem to have a common world-view. They are almost invariably political liberals who believe in the therapeutic model. The children are to be helped to cope with life as it is. Developing character, overcoming problems, is not emphasized so much as learning to be happy.

Tutors and College Admissions

Jack and Susy both had tutors in high school. Jack worked with Mrs. Debbie Brewer for three years, in every subject. Mrs. Brewer is a fantastically intelligent woman – and she is not hesitant to let you know the fact – with a physical handicap which constrains her to working out of her house. She gushes with empathy for her students.

Jack worked with Mrs. Brewer because it would have been highly unusual for him to work with his father. I certainly had the time, but for a parent to work with his kid was not the way it was done. Besides that, by high school Jack had developed an aversion to talking with me about any serious topic. He had become so thoroughly used to the self-esteem treatment that he could not handle anything that smacked remotely of criticism. The mere fact that I was successful in just about every realm of my life must have appeared to be implicit criticism. He would not have wanted to work with me. The question never came up.

Mrs. Brewer was successful enough to get him through high school and to coach them through the SATs and the college admissions process. He was successful on an intellectual level. However, his heart was never in his work. He recognized that he must attend the University. He was admitted to Bates College, which would have been socially rather akin to St. Andrews School. He rejected it vehemently. He rejected the University of Maryland as being too close to home. He chose instead to go to Humboldt State University in California. He wanted to be far away from his parents in a less demanding environment. The fact that it was in prime marijuana country might also have been an inducement.

Naomi had no problem with college admissions. She completed the process without much fuss, being admitted to U.C. Santa Cruz. It was appropriate to her abilities, and offered a major that interested her.

Susy had a tutor for math and perhaps one other subject. My relationship with Susy had become so strained by high school that I would not have dreamed of proposing to do it myself, though I am sure that I mentioned to Mary Ann that I could have handled it. Susy got extensive help in the college admissions process. I have no idea how she did on her SATs. I did not see her admission essay. However, she did manage to get admitted to that one school she really wanted to attend, Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. Though it is quite selective, I am sure the fact that she was going to be paying full tuition didn't hurt.

I was a tutor to some private school children in Washington D.C. and again in Kyiv. In every case the problem was not a want of intellect, but rather, the will to apply the intellect that they had. These children were simply not interested in school. Precisely the same as my own children.

Therapists

The schools seemed to work to pry the children away from the parents. The apparent attitude was "Thank God for us – the parents don't know anything." Whatever the children needed, the schools had experts to provide. Presumably this was okay with most parents, who were working very demanding careers and didn't have the time. Although we did, the attitude was that the experts know best.

The therapists were all of the same persuasion. Dr. Spock, the Sadkers and others looked out for the children's tender psyches and avoided requiring hard work of them or enforcing discipline.

Conclusion

It is unfashionable to say that one is unhappy with the way their children turned out. A majority of parents continue to offer excuses such as "they're just finding their way," or "he just hasn't found the right girl yet," or "he is still looking for a job that suits him," or "we're so glad she has decided to come out of the closet and her partner is such a nice girl." Nonsense. We, the parental generation, failed them – we did not raise our millennial children to be adults and they have not turned out to be adults.

This is exactly the thesis of Ben Sasse's best-selling "The Vanishing American Adult." The millennial generation is not taking on adult responsibilities in the workplace, family, or civic life. When I survey the success of my children's playmates, I find it easy to observe that things could

be worse. Our kids work, they are not on drugs, have not contracted incurable diseases, and so far as I know are not gay. Not that there's anything wrong with being gay, of course. But it is rather incompatible with having grandchildren. By the larger measure of success, having children and perpetuating our civilization, all three are failures. That is what impelled me to leave and start a second family.