Asher's Book Challenges the Concept of Codependency

Ramona M. Asher, a member of MISF, has recently had a book published by the University of North Carolina Press. The title of the book is Women with Alcoholic Husbands: Ambivalence and the Trap of Codependency.

The book calls into question the concept of "codependency" as a label often applied to women married to alcoholics. The label of codependent implies that the woman is "addicted" to the alcoholic spouse—enabling the spouse to remain alcoholic by not sufficiently confronting him. Asher suggests that women married to men who drink should not blame themselves, but rather figure out what they can do to help themselves.

"Women married to alcoholic men should not blame themselves..."

The book is based on interviews with more than fifty women in family treatment programs. Asher's research took her two and half years to complete; each woman was interviewed three times. The transcribed interviews yielded more than 2000 pages of material on which Asher based her qualitative study.

"I wrote this book for two reasons: first, to tell these women's stories, and second, to offer sociological insights into them," says Asher. "My book offers an experiential account of these women's lives, looking at social factors such as institutional structures, interaction, and culture."

"Too often," says Asher, "we are so concerned with labeling a problem that we do not find out what the problem really is. We should be concerned about the label of codependency because it does not bear up well under scientific scrutiny: there is no valid proof that something called codependency is 'real.' Furthermore, the label sets up expectations about self-definition and rehabilitation needs that may not be in the best interests of women."

This is not a how-to book. However, Asher, a feminist, advises that women dealing with husbands who have a drinking problem need to learn interpersonal skills such as assertiveness and constructive verbal defense. "If women had more personal empowerment they could literally take years off of their suffering with this kind of relationship problem," she says. She also suggests learning about alcoholism and Al-Anon, as well as about alternative resources.

Asher says she is frequently asked if her work stems from personal experience, and she stresses that it does not. When she entered college in the middle 1970s, campuses were alive with women's issues. Asher became acquainted with people who were establishing a battered women's shelter and working in the alcohol research and recovery field. She became fascinated with the dynamic in which women came into a shelter or Al-Anon thinking that their husbands had a problem and left thinking that they themselves had one.

(Continued on page 7)
Message from the President

David Wiggins

This spring the Minnesota Historical Society hired me as the program manager for the new Saint Anthony Falls interpretive program. Along with a few other contracts, this new job has put a real squeeze on my time. While I intend to complete the rest of my term as president of MISF, I recognize that this must be my last year as president.

Like the other members of the board, and most members of the Forum, the balancing act between giving time to the Forum and devoting time to the other activities of life can be difficult. I think that we have all been forced to scale back our plans for what the Forum can and should do to something that is achievable. The job of president has become less of a burden as Forum committees have taken over more and more of the day-to-day operation of the organization. I think that this is going to be the way it will have to work in the future, at least until we can manage to grow large enough to afford a paid staff. Until that time it is going to be important for members of the Forum, especially those not on the Board of Directors, to support the committees in their work.

Committee Work

MISF committees have been reorganized this year. The Membership and Fund Raising Committee, chaired by Curt Hillstrom, is now focused on membership services, recruiting new members, and fundraising activities that make appeals to the general membership. Recent action by the Board approved the suggestion by this committee that a list of "Friends of Scholars" be drawn up. These would be people who might be interested in contributing to the organization but who, for one reason or another, do not wish to be regular members. The Board approved a recommendation by the Fundraising Committee that members and "Friends" be solicited for funds at least once a year.

The Grants Committee, chaired by Ramona Asher, has worked on developing grant proposals. They have a strong hope that it may be possible to find funding to revive the Scholar of the Year Award. It would be especially helpful if this award could be linked to a high school mentor program. This committee is also working on a profile statement about the organization to use in writing grant proposals.

Program Committee

The Program Committee, now chaired by Ginny Hansen, is responsible planning and publicizing regular meetings of the membership. Her committee has been responsible for the recent meetings at the Barnes and Noble Bookstore by Lake Calhoun, where both the Asher and Smith lectures took place.

The new Promotions and Publicity Committee is chaired by Laura Weber; the responsibility of this committee is to publicize the organization.

All of these committees will be coordinated through the board, by having at least one board member on each committee. The committee structure, however, will only work if members who are not on the board also work on the committees.

If you would like to help with any of the committees, please feel free to contact the committee chair.

The Program Committee announces an Open Forum, Saturday, August 29th, from 12:30-3pm. (Henn. County Historical Society, 2303 3rd Av S)... An excellent opportunity to find out what other people are working on and discuss your own projects. ... Open! ... Fun! ... Join in! ...

The Forum is a quarterly publication of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum

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The deadline for the next issue of The Forum is September 10.

Board of Directors:
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Laura Weber
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Tour for Members: Thursday, August 27th

Tour the Saint Anthony Falls Historic District!

Come down to the river and see the waterfall that built a city!

Thursday, August 27 at 6:30 p.m., MISF members are invited to attend a special free tour of the Saint Anthony Falls Historic District led by MISF President, and the district's new interpretive program manager, David Wiggins. The tour will start from 125 S.E. Main Street, Minneapolis. Wear good walking shoes; the tour will last about two hours and will involve about a mile and a half of walking. This tour will explore Hennepin and Nicotlet Islands, old Saint Anthony, and the West Side Milling District. For those who can't make this special tour, the Minnesota Historical Society is offering a new walking tour program in the district on Sunday afternoons and Monday evenings, through September. For more information call 627-5433.

Gilman Book: The Grand Portage Story

Grand Portage: The Value of Interacting Boundaries

Grand Portage deserved a good history book, and the Minnesota Historical Society and National Park Service had the good sense to hire MISF member Carolyn Gilman to write it. She has produced an excellent book.

In this Columbus quincentennial year of not-too-subtle debate on the subject of Euro-American relations with the native peoples of this continent, it is truly refreshing to find a book that treats the subject with such respect and understanding of the complexity and paradox involved. Carolyn Gilman proves that you don't have to sacrifice solid research to write a popular history.

Fur trade history, in recent years, has treated the topic of the cultural relationships between Indians and whites as a two-way exchange that was every bit as important as their economic relationships. Gilman in this book uses the idea of "boundaries" as a very useful way to view these relationships. The boundary between British Canada and the new United States was important in determining the history of the post at Grand Portage, but equally important to understanding this history are the boundaries between the white and Ojibway cultures, between East and West, and between the material and the spiritual world. Gilman writes, "Slowly the world is coming to realize that boundaries can be valuable things. It is along the edges that our cultures are most creative. Where people can see what lies outside, change and innovation happen. And the places of overlap can be the most interesting of all."

Grand Portage was... a place where boundaries overlapped."

Grand Portage was, beyond a doubt, a place where boundaries overlapped; this interesting history is full of great stories that bring this out. The true stories are much more engaging than the popularized versions of the fur trade. The book makes clear that behind the legends, colorful dress, and quaint traditions, the "merry" voyageurs were nearly slaves, with crippling forced labor, pitiful to non-existent wages, and no rights at all.

The book doesn't begin or end with the fur trade. It is a history of Grand Portage from Ojibway legend up to modern times. The book considers the recent history of the community at Grand Portage with the same useful device of looking at boundaries, and finds that the past and present overlap at this place that is a boundary between them.

Gilman was assisted in the research for this book by the Minnesota Historical Society's archaeologist and historian, Alan R. Woolworth, who, with his wife, Nancy Woolworth, performed much of the archaeological excavation of the old post. A suggested reading list and detailed notes for each chapter enhance the value of the book. The book is richly illustrated, and since it was printed in Singapore, very affordable ($8.50-paperback). It is available from the Minnesota Historical Society and in local bookstores.

-David Wiggins
Forum Focus

Building the Noosphere

by Curt Hillstrom

I didn't quit my job to be a scholar. I quit for other reasons. I had been working as a systems analyst, designing a data base for a small distillery in Kentucky. Every day I would go to work and face a management, both that of my company and of the distillery, that would serve Tom Peters, guru of excellence in business, as good bad examples. Eventually, the distillery's entire data processing department management was replaced and the company I worked for had their contract terminated. But I was already gone by then. My story here, however, is not to tell about my leaving, but to explain why I never went back to work in the traditional sense.

Deciding to return to the very basics, I spent time trying to decide what I really wanted to do. I had majored in philosophy in college, but being a philosopher was not a practical consideration. What I really wanted was to understand just what sort of universe we inhabit and how we ought to live our lives. But isn't that what a philosopher does? I gave in. After all, why should I give up what I most important to me to spend what I believed was my only lifetime helping distillers keep track of their data.

So philosopher it was. But what does a philosopher do? I could spend thousands of dollars and go back to school for several years, possibly getting a Ph. D., in order to be qualified for a questionable job market? And what about my wife and kids? The solution wasn't easy.

Being a househusband requires a cooperative wife who is just as delighted to go to work outside the home as she is to stay home. In making these decisions and accepting the considerable constraints of two kids, the care of a house, and attendance at PTA and commit-

"my career path has seemed to meander..."

tee meetings, as well as not being sure how to go about this, my career path has seemed to meander. I have had my successes: Sunday school classes that worked, meetings in which I clarified terms and concepts that created solutions, and my own philosophical epiphanies. Unfortunately, failures have been at least as frequent; half-finished projects clutter my desk.

Then one day, shortly after we returned to Minnesota, I ran across a MISF brochure. I wish that I could say that the Forum has transformed my life, enriched my knowledge, and led to planes of discernment I had never imagined before. And it could do that, someday. But what I found, when I joined the Forum, was an organization still learning to walk. We can take too long responding to people, occasionally lose track of members, and our publicity can consist of some posters put up a few days before an event. Still, I belong. I belong because the Forum's mission is consistent with my own: to learn and to teach. And the Forum is learning to walk: fundamental things are going on that will enable us to better support those who choose to be independent scholars.

Teilhard de Chardin postulated a "noosphere", a realm of reality beyond the biosphere which has been created by human culture and largely consists of all that we know, and which will eventually lead to the conclusive evolutionary step that will integrate everything into a mystical vision of finality. While I'm not big on mystical visions, I like the idea of the building of the noosphere, in which I think the Forum has an important role to play. Not only are there philosophers in the computer industry, there are poets doing construction, artists in the secretarial pool, historians in the boardroom, each doing their equivalent of distillery data bases.

While the Forum and I lurch about trying to do what we are trying to do, we are, in our infinitesimal way, adding to a noosphere which, if it will lead anywhere, can only be somewhere good.

"FORUM FOCUS" comments are the author's and may, or may not, agree with the MISF Mission, its policies, or goals.
Member News & Notes:

Contributions to this column are welcome at any time. Feel free to send us press releases about your work, or write up a paragraph or two on your own.

Forum member Gloria Morris-Grothe presented a paper entitled "Cultural Pluralism and Assimilation within Swedish Song Traditions: Migration Influences on Elements and Styles" at the 82nd meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study on May 1, 1992. This year's conference was held at the Radisson Metrodome (U of MN campus). Participating were graduate students, faculty members, and independent scholars in Scandinavian studies from the U.S., Canada, and the Scandinavian countries. Topics included literature, linguistics, folklore, film and drama, music, visual arts, history, immigration, cultural pluralism, and social problems. Morris-Grothe also presented a program of Swedish songs at the Ethnic-American Celebration held during Grande Olde Days in St. Paul on June 7.

David S. Wiggins had an article, "Origins of the Future," published in the Science Museum of Minnesota's Boghopper Magazine, Spring 1992 issue. It is Wiggins's contention that "the move from mechanistic to self-evolving theories might mean individual organisms have control over their future world order."

Carol DeBoer-Langworthy reports that she has entered a Ph.D. program at Union Institute in Cincinnati.


Ed. Note: A Weber article is scheduled for our next issue.

Jill Waterhouse is Co-coordinator for a new exhibit and happening in Calhoun Square. The Cinderella Fairy Tale: Repercussions & Sexual Overtones of the Shoe & Foot.

Ginny Hansen served this past year as Pres. of the North Central Chapter of the American Medical Writers' Assoc. She also published an article on Chaos in a businesswomen's newsletter, Frau und Carriere, Freiburg, Germany.

Dave Juncker presented a report on human sensory function and perception errors for use in understanding contradictory accident reports in court.

Susan Milnor reported on a recent newsletter questionnaire that she is researching a public art project about wetland preservation, to create an educational Hypercard program. She received an R & D stipend from Forecast Public Artworks, Minneapolis, to develop this program. Milnor was the first editor of this newsletter.

Bob Thimmesh and his daughter, Catherine, opened the Thimmesh Gallery on June 20. The gallery, which currently features the work of seven distinguished artists, painters, and sculptors is located at 25 N. 4th Street in Minneapolis (next to Nate's Clothing), on the second floor. Gallery hours are Tues. to Fri. 11 am-6 pm; Sat. 12-5pm.

Betsy-Tacy Society Forms Twin Cities Chapter

A Twin Cities chapter of the Betsy-Tacy Society was formed earlier this year. The society was established to promote and preserve the works of Maud Hart Lovelace, author of the series of ten books that center on the turn-of-the-century adventures of Betsy Ray, Tacy Kelly, Tib Mueller and their many friends. The series is based on Lovelace's life growing up in Mankato.

The inaugural event of the society was a Maudie Hart Lovelace Centennial Birthday Party at Borders Bookstore in Calhoun Square April 25, 1992. Forum member Rhoda Gilman was on hand to autograph copies of the newly-reprinted Lovelace historical novel for adults, Early Candelight. Gilman wrote the foreword of the book, which takes place in the early days of Fort Snelling. (Publisher of the new edition, which has sold out its first printing, is the Minnesota Historical Society.)

The Betsy-Tacy Society hopes to raise funds to purchase and restore Lovelace's childhood home in Mankato, to see that the Betsy-Tacy series remains available, and to bring back the books that have gone out of print.

The national Betsy-Tacy Society held a convention, July 10-12, 1992, in Mankato.
Fill this page with your thoughts! Let us hear your opinion! Write us a letter! Send us a cartoon! We'd like to know what you're thinking—about what we have printed or about topics of interest to scholars in general. For this time, we have decided to run this collection of cartoons because they speak (more aptly than prose?) to the MISF world.

Mark: Son, have you given any thought to the sort of job you want when you graduate? Son: Sure. Mark: I don't know what field I'll be in, but I know that it will have to be creative — a position of responsibility, but not one that restricts personal freedom.

[Cartoon image]

Son: It must pay fairly well, the atmosphere, relaxed, informal, my colleagues interesting, mellow, and not too concerned with a structured working situation.

Mark: In short, you have no intention of getting a job.

Son: I don't say that.

[Cartoon image]

Quote of the day
Lily Tomlin, on women's role in American politics:

"Seventy-two years ago women got the vote. Boy, does time fly when you're being repressed."

[Cartoon image]

"To be a philosopher is not to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically."

H. D. Thoreau
Walden, Ch.1
Such dynamics led to her interest in the transformations of identity associated with abusive relationships and treatment processes. At the suggestion of a mentor at the University of Duluth, Asher began to study this "identity transformation" and wound up writing a doctoral thesis on the social dynamics of alcoholic marriages and rehabilitation.

Asher has taught at the University of Minnesota, Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and at the Univ. of Wisconsin / Eau Claire. Her publishing contract with the Univ. of North Carolina Press stemmed from academic contacts at the University of Minnesota. It took about four months to put together the final draft of the book, which was largely the third revision of her dissertation. For the book, she wrote (and rewrote ten times) a conclusion not in the thesis.

Reviews and sales have been favorable. One reviewer described it as a book he would adopt as a textbook; another called it the best book she had read about the concept of codependency. Asher’s editor says that the publisher is looking at a second printing.

The book is available at some bookstores in the Twin Cities. The Forum also has copies for sale. Asher will be happy to autograph these copies, and proceeds from these private sales will benefit the Forum. For information call Ginny Hansen at 374-5505. The book is available in paperback for $12.95 or hardcover for $29.95.

- Lucy Brusic

Sci-Hums Announce Schedule

The Science and Humanities Study Group has announced its schedule for the summer and fall. On July 27 the group finished Firsg's Lila and on August 17 will begin discussing Stephen Jay Gould's book, Wonderful Life. Discussion of the Gould book will continue on September 29. All of these discussions will take place at the home of Ginny Hansen. In addition, an all-day retreat is planned for September 12 at the Wilder Retreat, St. Croix; the focus will be on a theme to which participants will respond from the perspectives of their various fields. For further information call Hansen at 374-5505 (days) or 377-5960 (evenings).

Membership Application to the Minnesota
Independent Scholars'Forum

Regular

___ $15.00 (under/unemployed)
___ between $15.00 and $36.00
___ $36.00 (regularly employed)

Household

___ $18.00 (under/unemployed)
___ between $18.00 and $40.00
___ $40.00 (regularly employed)

Sustaining

___ $50.00 or more

Donor

___ $75.00 or more

Benefactor

___ $100.00 or more

Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City ____________________________ State ______ Zip __________
Telephone (home) __________ Telephone (work) __________

Mail to: Curt Hillstrom
715 E. 57th St.
Minneapolis MN 55417
Last Words
By Dr. "J"

Needed:
New Definitions for Personal Space

As humans, we have tended to maintain as much control over our immediate surroundings as possible. In fact, we become uneasy when someone invades our "space", or crowds us too closely; and we become angry and protective if the invasion persists for any length of time.

In addition, a worldwide explosion in information gathering and transmitting has made it possible to extend our senses literally around the world. We view "live" events daily from almost anywhere on the planet.

I contend that a new and very important physiological transformation has taken place that requires our consideration.

Join me in quickly reviewing the recognition pathways for both the deep pressure signals from a foot and the information received from a "live" TV news show across the living room.

1. Deep pressure detection is the responsibility of a network of very tiny nerve cells in our bodies. These nerves send electrical signals (skin to brain) at speeds of 0.3-1.0 meters/sec. The new information provided is important if we wish to learn about small pebbles in our sandals, or an ill-fitting shoe.

   Note: Information immediately important to our survival, such as sight, hearing, muscle position, etc., are carried by special nerve pathways at much higher speeds (120+ m/sec).

2. "Live" events recorded by TV crews are transmitted via satellite, waveguide and local transmission systems to our televisions. The images coming to our eyes are very rapidly transmitted as nerve signals to the visual interpretation centers of our brains.

The total elapsed time from "live" world news event to recognition, is shorter than the time it takes for our brains to detect a pebble or a new hump in the bottom of our shoes.

What, then, constitutes the outer sphere, or limit, of our sense perceptions? Where do we wish to draw the limits or boundaries of our bodies (both now, and in the future when even faster input systems will be available)? What is our personal area of influence, the area we will fight to protect? Will we require similar buffer areas for our families, communities and each nation?

We are rediscovering the interconnectiveness and interdependence of our world and all living organisms. We must develop an enhanced sense of group interconnectiveness and interdependency in each world citizen to match the sense of individual progress and solo exploration we now cherish.