



**The Gift of Hospitality:  
Opening the Doors of Community Life to  
People with Disabilities**

by Mary O'Connell

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## "No Relatives, No Friends, Nothing To Do"

Jo gave birth to two sons. As babies, each of them, like all babies, spent most of the time with their parents, being held and cuddled and loved. One son then gradually moved off from his parents' arms to explore the world. On the street he found playmates; at school he made friends with kids in his class; at his job he joined co-workers for lunch and parties; in his apartment building neighbors would say hello; he had girlfriends and fell in love. Watching it all, his mother reflected: At the beginning he had only his family, but by the time he was a young man he had surrounded himself with other people.

The other son also started out in his parents' arms. But he came with several disabilities, which were given one label<sup>1</sup> or another, and those problems and labels got in the way of his exploring the world the way his brother had. Instead of having opportunities to define himself the way his brother had, his labels defined him, until most people could only see the problem, not the boy. Instead of opening out, his life closed in upon itself. Instead of family and friends gathering around him, they fell away. He went only to special schools and special programs. By the time he was fourteen, the only people he saw regularly, besides his mother, were other people with disabilities and people who were paid to give him some service. "He had," said his mother, "no relatives, no friends, nothing to do."

The first son led the kind of life most people expect to lead (even if the reality often falls short): a life in *community*. At each stage along the way, he met other people. Most remained casual acquaintances, people to share a common project or a friendly meal. Others became intimate friends or lovers, people he could expect to care about him over the long haul.

But the labels attached to the second son somehow kept him out of community and pushed him, instead, into a *system* that was organized to provide services to meet his needs. People who met him focused on what was different about him, not on the things that made him a boy like other boys. He had few opportunities to meet people casually, and no chance to develop the close, intimate relationships that make up the most important part of other people's lives. He was isolated.

Part of what causes this isolation is *intolerance of differences*. People who are mentally retarded, or disabled in other ways, may move about, or talk, or act in ways that are differ-

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<sup>1</sup>The labels talked about in this book include such descriptions as: mentally retarded, cerebral palsy, developmentally disabled, physical disability, deaf, blind, multiply handicapped, mentally ill, elderly.

ent from the ways other people, without disabilities, do. Perhaps they can't eat by themselves, or use the bathroom without help. Perhaps they express themselves in different ways, or you can't tell that they're communicating at all unless you listen very patiently over a long time. Perhaps they get upset more easily than you'd expect and when they do they let out their frustrations, fears, and feelings in unfamiliar ways.

Everybody's different in some ways, of course; but the differences we're talking about go beyond the bounds of what we're used to. But that's partly a vicious circle. In the past, people who were "different" were shipped away to institutions. The rest of us became less used to seeing such people around — and thus, even more conscious of differences, and less sure about how to react to them.

Shipping people off to institutions is the most obvious form of isolation. That's what happened to Jo's son when he was 14. In institutions, the system is at its strongest and the isolation is most complete.

But even outside institutions — even for people who physically live at home or in a "community setting" — the isolation of living entirely in a world of paid service can still be overwhelming. Jo's son, after all, lived at home. Thousands of other people have, in recent years, been moved out of big institutions and into small group homes in city neighborhoods or suburban streets. But inside they are still surrounded, not by neighbors and co-workers and friends and lovers, but by other labeled people and those who are paid to serve them.

The iron fences of the institution may be coming down, but the walls of the service world are still firmly in place. And people from either side can't see over those walls and into the lives of people on the other side.

Karl is one man who is able to see over the walls. Karl is confined to a wheelchair and does not speak. But he has held onto his dreams of what life could be:

if he could live in his own home, and not in an institution or group home

if he could eat what he likes, not something that has been prepared for 100 people

if he could drink when he's thirsty, not when it's convenient for the staff

if he could have a paying job, not sit around and read newspaper

if he could go to the church he chooses, not the only one that's accessible to him

if he could get his hair cut when he thinks he needs it, not when the barber is scheduled to do his ward

if he could wear his own clothes, not clothes chosen by others for easy handling and laundry

if he could go sit outside on the porch when the sun shines, not just at scheduled recreational periods

if he could go to the corner grocery with a friend, not on a field trip with two dozen others

if he could be on a TV show, not just watch one

if he could have his own things in his own place that's decorated his own way, not the blank anonymity of institutional life.

Today, people like Karl are fighting to fulfill their dreams. They, and others, are trying to break down the walls:

the walls of isolation that keep labeled people out of community life, and

the walls of misunderstanding and fear that prevent communities from accepting isolated people.

This book is about that effort.



## Systems and Communities

But first, it's worth taking time to examine what it is about the social service "system" that produces this kind of isolation. Weren't social services, after all, designed to *help* people with special problems? And aren't people better off when they have such help, in a specially designed setting where they can feel comfortable?

There isn't space here to go into the history of social services (if you want to read more, a good source is Wolf Wolfensburger, *The Nature and Origins of Our Institutional Models*).<sup>2</sup> But certainly it should be acknowledged that they were designed with the best of intentions: to protect and serve people who might otherwise be ignored or victimized, or worse. Judith, one of the pioneers of the community life movement, recalls being told by her father that in his home village in England, "children like you [i.e., quadriplegics] wouldn't survive."

That there are resources today to enable Judith not only to survive but to lead a full, vigorous life is an indisputable right. The problem is clearly not that services exist to *support* a life like Judith's. The problem arises when the services *take over* the life they're supposed to be supporting:

When Judith, to get the help she needs, had to move to a hospital where impersonal rules determined when she'd get up, what she'd eat, when and how she could move about — rules that bore no relationship to how Judith herself would choose to order her life.

Or when Pat discovered that his years in a sheltered workshop made him unemployable in the regular job market, because he had no work experience and no references outside the system.

Or when Jo's son's group home required that she list *in advance* every visitor who might stop by to see him.

In these circumstances, people and their families lose the freedom to control their lives — they even lose the basic *belief* in their ability to do so. And they lose the relationships with other human beings that are basic building blocks of life. Instead, they become surrounded by people who are paid to be with them, to organize, manage, direct, and oversee their lives. At that point the social service system assumes a measure of control that most of the rest of us would find intolerable (as anyone who's been hospitalized can understand immediately). And it isolates them from other people outside the system, from the community.

The community, meanwhile, loses something when it exiles people into the social service

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<sup>2</sup>Contact Training Institute, Syracuse University, 805 W. Crouse Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13244-2280.

system. It loses the gift of each individual: Those who are exiled, like the rest of us, have their own beauty and their own potential. Those who take time to know such people speak eloquently of their gifts: One woman is an excellent baker, another is tender and loving with little children. One man loves to hear gossip but never repeats it; another loves animals and is a willing caretaker for them. And one man is described, simply, as bringing joy and peace into other people's lives.

When the community cuts itself off from people who are disabled, it also denies part of what it is to be human. A community that has no place for those who cannot speak, or walk, or do higher mathematics is finally impoverishing itself. It becomes intolerant of differences, thus narrowing the path we all must travel. And it makes itself an impotent place, a place that doesn't help each of us live through disappointment, and failure, and sickness, and sorrow, and death — experiences that cannot be isolated because they come to everyone.

*In community  
people are known  
as individuals.*





## Joshuas: People Who Make the Walls Come Tumbling Down

Pat came to Ontario as a young man, looking, like a lot of other young men, for "a better life." But, unlike other young men, he found a lot of his choices already made for him. He was sent to live in a house with several other people he didn't know, but who someone else decided were just like him and so would make good roommates. He looked for a job but found the only one available was a place with a big sign out front announcing that it, too, was for people just like him. Inside, the work was boring and pay was low — \$10 a week. He kept looking for alternatives, but found there weren't any for people who are "just like him." So he created his own alternative. He ran away.

It's impossible to meet Pat without being struck first of all by his wisdom and courage. He found himself trapped inside the social service system, and refused to accept that fate. So he mustered his own resources to break out. He slept several nights on a park bench, until a passing stranger took the time to listen to him. Today, he has his own job, his own apartment, and his own mission in life. "For people like me who are labeled retarded, society is the judge and jury, and you don't get a fair trial. I'm not guilty! And neither are most of my friends. Or, if I'm guilty of having a handicap, so is just about everyone else. I've been trying to change the ways of society, so people like me can look up and see the possibility of a future."

Pat is an extraordinary individual, and he did things the hard way: he broke out of a system *by himself* and created his own life in the community on his own terms.

But most people (with or without handicaps) are by definition *not* extraordinary: and they would find doing what Pat did beyond their capacity. Yet other people are coming together to find ways to break down the isolation of labels and social services and make the community whole again.

How can this happen?

A *family* can do it for one of their members.

Jo, for example, refused to give up. By the time her son Daniel was fourteen, isolation had made him highly emotional and sometimes violent. At that point, "we lost Daniel to an institution, because people didn't rally round. But from that time on, my bent was to release him." It hasn't been easy. Everytime she thought she'd freed him, the system followed him. She began working with other families struggling to free their loved ones and to put

more "natural" support networks into their lives. Today, Daniel is in his own apartment, with a roommate, and friends who drop by for parties or to listen to music. We've come, she says, "an inch along a ten-mile journey."

But families face special problems, as Jo has discovered in working with them.

Some families have been so rejected by society that they are ashamed of their disabled member.

Some families, imbued with the American spirit of independence, are afraid to ask for help.

Some families have heard so much about labels and therapies and programs that they can't imagine anything in their child's life except *more* programs. ("My son would like to play basketball," said one woman, "but there's no program for him to do it.") They have lost confidence in their power to act without expert help.

And some people have no families.

How else?

A *friend* can help.

Frankie is a woman who knows the power of friendship. She found a friend for Clarice, when nobody else had ever found Clarice before. Clarice was one of those people you read about occasionally in the paper: locked up in a closet, unable to walk or talk or go to the bathroom, discovered one day by exterminators come to spray the house for bugs. Frankie found somebody named Gloria. "For awhile, Gloria was just going to visit her occasionally in the hospital. I didn't think that was enough, but I didn't say anything: All relationships have to be valued. Then Gloria called me one day and said, 'Do you know they put Clarice in a nursing home and didn't even *tell* me?' I said, 'Well, when I asked you to be her friend, I knew you'd do the best thing by her.' She called me back a few weeks later to tell me she's going to go for custody."

Frankie has a way of finding friends who can do things like that. But she doesn't think it's anything special. "There are people out there," she says, "just *waiting* to be asked." But too often such people who are willing don't know how to help; or they get channeled into "volunteering" one afternoon a month at the state hospital.

But even for a very strong, committed friend, breaking down years of isolation can be difficult. Sometimes the help comes best from a *circle of friends* who pool their imagination and their efforts to help someone they love. Judith's circle even has a name — the Joshua Committee.

Judith has used a wheelchair all her 38 years, and she needs an attendant to help her meet all of her physical needs — eating, using the bathroom, moving about, scratching her nose. As a child living at home and as a university student, she had attendant care, and she participated in the usual childhood activities, grew up, went to school, earned her degree, got a job. Then, because the system decreed that subsidized attendant care is not available for working adults, she suddenly no longer could afford to live alone. She moved to a chronic care hospital, where she lived for four years. But because she *wasn't sick*, the hospital proved, in her words, "nearly fatal." Her vitality, and independence, not to mention the irritating habit of going out to work everyday, caused constant struggles with the hospital staff. A friend, Marsha, who came to visit, asked in astonishment, "How can you live here? You who are so energetic and competent and normal. How can you stand this?" Judith found it increasingly hard to stand alone. She became worn out, suicidal, and one day in March, 1980, she collapsed.



*Sometimes the help comes best from a circle of friends who pool their imagination and their efforts to help someone they love.*

That week, the Joshua Committee was formed. As Judith lay in a friend's house, Marsha and other people who cared about her came together. "Alone, none of Judy's friends could deal with the enormity of the crisis — yet we had all expected Judy to do it. Now we began to see how hard she has to work simply to live." Judith dubbed this support group the Joshua Committee, "because we were going to break down walls." Each member had both general and specific tasks: budget, health and attendant care, social, professional, spiritual, rest and relaxation. Judith herself was part of the circle. "We were all friends," says Marsha. We had many meetings. We never gave up or gave in, although we got more angry and tired. We were constantly amazed that Judith had indeed survived so long."

Judith's circle helped set up regular attendant care with a paid coordinator, and got the Ontario government to pay for it. She lives in an apartment in a section of Toronto where many other single people her age live; her attendants' schedules are flexible so that "I can now decide when I will get up, when and where I will have lunch or supper, and what time I will go to bed" — a level of choice unthinkable for many people with disabilities but taken for granted by everyone else. Judith helped set up the Toronto Citizen Advocacy Program and works for the Canadian Association for Community Living. She travels around the United States and Canada to pursue her work of building relationships between typical and labeled citizens.

Judith's circle was the first, but it's no longer the only one. Other support circles are popping up around Toronto, many with an active boost from Judith and the other members of her original group.

Tom, for example, is a 19-year-old with significant handicaps, including being unable to talk (though he makes other sounds). At his segregated school, his mother discovered, he was only getting a few minutes of the teacher's attention each day; he was getting quieter and quieter. Tom's mother was determined to expand his world, not let it wither away. So she called together four people who knew him and asked, will you each give me a year of your time while I find out how Tom should live his life? The support of this circle enabled her to find a new "alternative" school for Tom, where the students took him as a friend on his own terms; three of them, for example, joined with him to create a "sound poetry" group. Since then, Tom's family have arranged for him to have his own apartment in their building, and hired Jerry to help him explore the community. Tom has a job as a messenger/collater; he's joined a peace group, and spends time at a local donut shop and at school. The support circle (with Tom's active participa-

tion) continues to meet every six weeks or so, to support Tom and his family in sustaining this broader life for him.

Circles like this one, and like Judith's original Joshua Committee, have proved that life in community is, in Judith's words, "not simply a dream but an actual possibility for many other devalued persons, and a current reality for me."

Judith is another one of those extraordinary persons, and she has attracted, and kept, some extraordinary friends. What about people who can't start out counting on that kind of support? Who can help them?

We've talked so far about the social service system as though it is one vast, undifferentiated whole. But, in fact, within the system itself there are a small but growing number of *imaginative and committed people who have taken it on themselves to break down the isolation* they see around them, and make the community whole again. Because they are themselves part of the system, they can't do the job all by themselves. But they can start things rolling, and then stand back and see what happens.

People like Kathy, for example, who got to know a woman named Rebecca. Rebecca is a short woman who loves to drink coffee and smoke cigarettes. She doesn't talk, and does a few things other people might consider strange, like shake her hands in the air when she gets excited. Kathy discovered that Rebecca enjoys being with people and that she likes to wash dishes. So she started taking Rebecca to hang out at Marlene's diner. Today, Rebecca has become one of the regulars at Marlene's. Sometimes she washes the dishes, sometimes she doesn't, and sometimes she doesn't act like everyone else. But the folks at Marlene's shrug: that's just the way she is, and that's all right with them.

Or there's Sandy, who through her work got to know a man named Terry. Terry had lived for 25 years in an institution, then was transferred to a group home. Sandy found out a number of things about him, including that he likes to fish. She arranged to have him attend the anglers' meeting up at the Eagles Club. Turned out that the one thing Terry really wanted, that would really put him in solid with the anglers, was a boat. So Sandy got her employers to loan Terry the money to buy a boat and trailer. He still needs a car to pull it, of course, but plenty of people are willing to help with that in exchange for some fishing time.

Or Dave, who found a connection for Eric, who had been in an institution for several years. Because Eric is Ukrainian, Dave decided to start with the Ukrainian Catholic Church and with Alysha's Restaurant, a Ukrainian hangout in Winnipeg. Eric started spending time at the restaurant,

and before long he was talking to the cook in Ukrainian. One thing led to another, and now Eric works at Alysha's two days a week making pierogis. Michael, the cook, has become his friend, and there are "at least 50" other people who know Eric and accept him as another Winnipeg Ukrainian — as one of their own.

Or Cathy: the one thing she knew about Virginia, whom she met in a sheltered workshop for people with mental retardation, was that she liked African music — because Virginia liked to show off her photo of an African drum. Cathy looked around and, in her small Vermont town, managed to find an African music club *and* a teacher who teaches African music. Cathy told the teacher about Virginia; his response was, "well, I guess I should meet her and teach her." Virginia later tried out for, and was accepted into, the Kawansa Club, a group of multicultural women interested in music.

Or Gerry: when she first met Paulette, almost nobody else in the county even knew Paulette existed. Paulette's mother told Gerry that her daughter "couldn't do anything." Gerry looked a little closer and found among other things that Paulette loves children. "Well, I know a woman who runs a daycare center — being in a small town you get to know everyone — so I called her up. I told her, I have a friend named Paulette that I'd like you to meet. She loves children. Would you be willing to have her come help with the children?" Now Paulette goes to the daycare center frequently and has almost total charge of the infants for some portion of each day. When she doesn't show up, people call to ask where she is — she's that important to them.



*In Community,  
People have the chance  
to be accepted as  
whole persons*

Each of these stories (and there are many more like them) begins with an imaginative, committed person whose job it is to find ways to bring isolated people back into community. They have different words for what they do. Kathy calls it being a “bridge” out of isolation and into community life. Sandy talks about “guides” whose jobs it is “to listen, to help develop the vision, and to engage others to help the vision come true.” The other Cathy says she’s a “ticket-taker,” and adds her unshakeable belief that “Everybody’s got a ticket. For Virginia, it was the music.”

But each of these stories is also about a *community* that opened up to accept somebody, handicap and all. Kathy and Sandy and co. couldn’t do it alone. The Anglers’ Club accepted Terry; Marlene and her friends welcomed Rebecca; the Kawansa Club made space for Virginia; the daycare center welcomed Paulette; and the Ukrainians acknowledged Eric as one of their own.

What did it take for the community to do that? Nothing as dramatic as heroism — rather, something more ordinary, like *hospitality*. It took a simple willingness to open up, to listen, to trust, to see beyond the label to the person, and to accept that person as another human being.



## People to Know and Places to Hang Out

The stories in the preceding section tell of people who have, on their own or with the help of others, broken out of the isolation of the world of social services and into a variety of relationships with their fellow human beings. Let’s take a moment to look more closely at what those relationships are like.

Isolated people typically lack the whole range of relationships the rest of us take for granted. Other than their families, they have no intimate relationships: no close friends, no lovers, no spouses and children. The emotional impoverishment of such a life is obvious. And for people who are unable to live independently, the practical consequences are also devastating. Families agonize over who will take a caring and responsible place in the handicapped person’s life when the parents die.

Besides intimate relationships, however, isolated people also lack normal day-to-day relationships: the casual acquaintance of neighbors and shopkeepers, long-term association with classmates and coworkers, friendly interaction at churches, taverns, political campaigns, bowling leagues, poker games and picnics. If they take part in such real-world experiences at all, it’s always as part of a group.

They don’t play pickup basketball at the local park, but only in a special gymnastics program.

They don’t join the gardening club, but only the horticultural therapy program.

They don’t go the ballgame with a few buddies, but ride together on the retarded citizens bus.

They’re always in the company of other labelled people and their paid associates.

They have little chance to experience the diversity of other peoples lives; and, just as important, other people have little opportunity to get beyond fears and stereotypes about labeled people.

These two aspects of isolation could be roughly characterized as *private* (lack of personal, intimate relationships) and *public* (lack of casual, day-to-day contacts). People who are not independent must depend on others to help them find their way out of such isolation. Efforts to break isolation, as seen in the examples we've given so far, usually focus on either *private* or *public* approaches.

For example, Frankie tries to create personal, one-to-one friendships between a labeled person and another person in the community; Frankie asked Gloria to be Clarice's *friend*. She trusted that that friendship would help bring other blessings into Clarice's life, but she believed that friendship was the place to start.

The strength of the friendships sought by people like Frankie is the strength that comes from intimate relationships: they last over the long haul, and the participants share some responsibility for each other.



*In community,  
the diverse gifts of many people are recognized*





But, while such relationships are tremendously important, they are not enough to create a full life. The concern is that the relationships will not lead the isolated person into the broader life of the community.

Other people start in the public arena. They look for ways to bring the isolated person into normal, everyday contact with a whole range of other people. Such efforts can start anywhere:

Small businesses, like Marlene's diner or Alysha's Ukrainian bakery or the Jack and Jill Daycare Center. Other people have found a welcome at building supply shops, beauty parlors, pet stores, and auto mechanics.

Churches. Loretta is an Ohio woman in her late 50s who doesn't speak, and who had lived all her life on a farm with her brother. Her life entered a crisis when her brother took sick. One of the ways out, for her, came through joining a church. The congregation welcomed her — especially because Loretta was an excellent baker whose contributions to picnics and Christmas feasts were highly valued. When Loretta later developed cancer, the church people provided all the support her brother needed in caring for her. Sandy, who knows Loretta, says: "What a gift to Loretta in terms of spirit and hope: to understand that people were interested in her becoming well *because they needed her.*"

Public Places. George found his way out of isolation by visiting the local library. There he became friends with one of the county Commissioners, who was also on the Library Board. Soon he was helping with the Commissioner's campaign. Or there's Pete, who loved to hang out at police headquarters and the civil defense office, where he could listen to the police radio and feel a part of every scandal and disaster in the county.

Associations and Clubs. Terry found a place in the anglers club and the Bitty Baseball League; Virginia joined the Kawansa club.

The strength of such connections is in the way they enrich the person's life. They offer the possibility of opening out to other connections (Terry's work with the baseball league introduced him to families with children on the team, some of whom became his friends). They help the isolated person become part of something bigger which is not focused around disability but around some other purpose — winning baseball games, or election campaigns.

But the worry of those taking this path out of isolation is whether the isolated person will still end up lacking strong, close relationships. The casual relationships may not be enough to generate any commitment or shared sense of responsibility over the long term. Marlene and her friends, for example, cared for Rebecca and were happy to have her spend time at the diner each day, but were hesitant to get more involved in making decisions for Rebecca's life, which they saw as the responsibility of the social service agency.

People involved in this work worry about the shortcomings of each approach. Those who start from the side of intimacy and friendship keep looking for more opportunities to broaden out the connections. Frankie says she has learned to look for friends who are themselves well connected, in the hope that the friend will introduce the labeled person in turn to her own relatives, church members, neighbors and friends. Meanwhile those who focus on public life hope that some acquaintances will blossom into genuine friendship and commitment. Loretta, for example, clearly found that kind of support from her church.



## Offering Hospitality

The best way to talk about this work is to tell the stories: of Pat, Jo and her son, Loretta, Terry, Judith, Gloria and Clarice.

The success stories, however, should not mask the difficulties of this struggle; or the fact that for every person who has been helped on his or her way out of isolation, tens of thousands more are still trapped in the half-life of institutions and group homes and a social-service dominated world, or isolated in their own homes. Many thousands more community people are needed to extend their hospitality, to open up their communities and bring these exiled people home.

So this chapter is for folks who want to learn more about offering hospitality. It aims to tell how this work is done. But it is not a recipe or a checklist or a precise formula: because there is no formula. There is only the experience of others who have tried it, and have found some wisdom to share.



### Tell the Story

The language of social service is the language of categories and professionals. That language distances people from each other. No person is a category; each person's life is unique, and can be told *as a story*. But the stories of people who are disabled have not been heard.

This book, for example, is *not* about “mentally retarded and disabled individuals achieving meaningful social interaction with nondisabled persons through community outreach programs.”

This book *is* about how a bright, determined woman like Judith was almost overcome by the experience of being confined in a hospital until she found friends to help rescue her; or about how Loretta came to be accepted in a community that hadn't known she even existed before — in part because she could make such delicious cakes.

The language of social services is sterile. The language used to tell these stories has to be alive with images:

images like opening doors,  
    breaking down walls,  
        building bridges,  
            and bringing those who are exiled home.

Whatever language you use, telling the story means *telling the truth*, and trusting to the Biblical promise that the truth will make people free.



## Find the Ticket

Cathy believes everyone has a “ticket” out of isolation; the key is for someone to find that ticket and punch it. But to find the ticket you’ve got to look in the right places, and that means beginning the search in a different way.

You’ve got to look at the individual, not the category.

You’ve got to focus on the whole, not the part.

You’ve got to look for the capacity, not the deficit.

You’ve got to choose life, not death.

Virginia’s ticket was that photograph of the African drum. Rebecca’s ticket was her inexplicable love of washing dishes. Pete’s ticket was his pleasure in listening to the police radio. Paulette’s ticket was her affection for children.



## Ask the People

Hospitality is not a heroic virtue, but a commonplace part of everyday life. It’s the fundamental sense that you have to appeal to in asking other people to get involved in this work of welcoming isolated people back into community.

Frankie is an expert at asking people; she’s the one who asked Gloria to become a friend for Clarice. She doesn’t wait for extraordinary people to come along; she believes “that ordinary citizens are the key.” She also believes that “you can’t ask somebody to do something that you wouldn’t be willing to do yourself.” She doesn’t have any special sales pitch: she just invites people to get to know someone they wouldn’t ordinarily meet. She appeals to the things she believes in, “like love, friendship, equality — things you can’t buy, or if you can they’re not worth having.” She has had her share of rejection (“but then handicapped people are always being rejected, so I just absorb that”), but she holds firm to her belief that “there are people out there just *waiting* to be asked.”

Gerry wasn’t so confident about asking people when she first started out. But by now she reckons she’s talked to 150 people in her small town, from the woman who owns the daycare center to the desk sergeant at the police station, and so far only a few have turned her down. “People didn’t know they were needed because nobody told them. It shouldn’t astound me, because I know many people and know how good they are.” In her community, she says, people are used to rallying round when they know someone is in trouble.

These stories and others suggest some of the things you can appeal to in asking others to get involved.

Some people themselves are lonely, and need someone else to care about.

Some people are just the opposite: their lives are full. And that gives them the insight to understand what it would be like to be isolated. One man, for example, believed that family is the most important thing in anyone's life. He was introduced to another man who was labelled and isolated and without family of any kind. He understood immediately that this man's situation had cut him off from something that he knew was essential to being human. And he agreed to help.

Some people know that they have been blessed, and are anxious to share the blessings.

Some people fear that one day they may find themselves isolated, because of disease or age; they are willing to treat others as they would themselves want to be treated.

Sometimes you can appeal to the history and traditions of a community. Betty, who lives in Northern Wisconsin, reads old newspapers to find out what people did, in the days before there were social services and institutions, to help people in trouble. And she tells those stories: about how people came to each other's rescue when there was a flood, or how women brought food and clothes and practical help to new mothers, or how people kept their old folks at home. "People *crave* these stories," says Betty, "because the community's traditions are illustrated through them." She keeps looking for "the larger cultural and spiritual values about the purpose of life . . . that we can use in talking to people about other people who need to come home."

Sometimes it's enough to remind people that being part of a community involves "taking care of your own," the way Gerry reminds people in her town of their unspoken duty to rally round folks in trouble. Dave tapped into the sense that "Ukrainians take care of each other."

Often it's religion that provides the motivation. The Christian Gospel, for example, calls people to community; it demands that believers help those in trouble and share the suffering of those in pain. Judaism, too, carries a strong and explicit personal obligation to the community.



*In community  
is the free space  
where people come together  
to create and celebrate.*

And sometimes people just need to be told they *can* do something. Betty describes how families who are having trouble coping with one of their members often turn to experts they think will have the answers. And the experts tell them, “You can’t handle this, this is too much for you.” Says Betty: “I am astounded at the power of just saying to people, yes, *you can*.” The act of offering hospitality — of opening space for people who have been excluded — is a way for people to claim, and draw on, a power that many people don’t even know they have, a power within.

### **Trust the Wisdom of the Community**

This work is hard. You run across people whose lives have been appallingly sad, others who have become bitter or violent; people whose problems seem overwhelming, people for whom you just can’t find the “ticket.” No one person can be expected to “solve” such problems, and there is no “right” solution. But those who do the work say the best hope is in calling people together to take on the problem and trusting to their wisdom, together, to work it out.

Frankie, for example, tells the story of Johnnie Mae, who was overweight, living in “a pit,” and given to cutting up her clothes. Frankie found Anne to be a friend for Johnnie Mae, and Anne decided to take Johnnie Mae home. Then Anne called up: “*Now* what do I do?” Frankie suggested she call her family together and ask them. Anne’s daughter was at the meeting, and brought her little baby with her. Johnnie Mae loved that little baby. The family saw that and started thinking. The daughter, who works at a Head Start program, said, “maybe Johnnie Mae could come with me.” So Johnnie Mae started going to Head Start with the daughter, and found more little kids there to love. Now she spends four hours there each day. (And she’s stopped cutting up her clothes.)

Peter, who was part of Judith’s Joshua Committee and has since helped form circles around other people in trouble, describes this in words that echo the Christian Bible: “I believe that wherever two or three are gathered together, something emerges that is more than the sum of its parts. I am always surprised by the ideas that come out, that no single person alone could have generated.” Commenting on Johnnie Mae’s story, Peter says: “The power of people to sit down together and reflect on the reality of their relationships — that’s what breaks the isolation.”

### **Sustain Old Relationships and Look for New Ones**

The social service system is full of rules that break relationships — that’s one reason people become isolated in the first place. Peter tells about a man he knows who was sent to an institution that insisted he have no visitors for three months — a restriction that effectively broke his connection to his family. Jo tells about the time her son was moved to a group home and she had to fill out a form that asked: “Will your son have visitors and if so *name them*” (italics in Jo’s voice) — a question that makes no sense for anybody who expects to have friends and family routinely dropping by.

Breaking down isolation, by contrast, requires nurturing already existing connections, especially with family. That isn't easy. Often families have lost confidence, have felt rejected, devalued, powerless. Says Jo: "Family is very important to everybody and at any cost it should be nurtured."

And openness to new relationships is also key. Genuine relationships are mutual. They're not simply about one person helping another; they're about two people sharing laughter and hope and pain, and each of them recognizing the value of the other. When Ellen, for example, showed up to take Maggie to a friend's for Thanksgiving, Maggie gave her a card and a small present of \$1 for the holiday. Says Ellen, "Maggie's thoughtfulness and generosity always surprise me." Going out for coffee together is a regular feature of their friendship. Sometimes Ellen treats, sometimes Maggie. Ellen says she's just had breakfast, but Maggie orders a sweet roll for her anyway: "Don't talk crazy, Ellen: You can eat it."



*In community, people seek answers  
from their own experience and the wisdom of others.*

### **Use Your Imagination**

This work is more art than science. The solution is as likely to come from your imagination as from your rational mind. It's not a matter of designing programs but of creating visions; not of following protocols but fulfilling dreams. And believing in those dreams: believing that a woman who has been isolated could still have friends, or that a man whose life has been controlled could still escape and be free. Trusting that kind of vision means learning to hope.

This work is also not about "fixing" people so they fit into society. You need to come at the question from another side: finding the place, or the way, that people *do* fit: the way Rebecca fits with her friends at the diner. Human relationships can't be programmed. They are sustained by something deeper than surface characteristics. Marlene and her friends accepted Rebecca as she was; they didn't bother trying to "change" the things that made her different. Instead, they used their imagination to enter into Rebecca's life and interpret the things she does in ways that make sense ("When she shakes her hands like that, you just *know* she's happy").



## Look for Doors that Open onto Other Doors

Most people's social life resembles a maze of roundabout interconnections. You meet one person at work and become friendly; he invites you to a party at his house where you meet other people, one of whom belongs to a bowling league or a singing group and invites you to join; there you meet other people ... and so on.

In an earlier section of this book we talked about two approaches to bringing isolated people into community: some people start at the level of private life (family, friends, circles) while others start with more public participation (in churches, restaurants, associations, etc.). Whichever level you start with, it's important to look for connections that open out to other connections.

George, for example, started out by visiting the library. There he met a man on the library board, who was also a county commissioner. He became involved in the commissioner's campaign, where he met many other people and became well-known and liked in his community.

Frankie, who introduced Clarice to Gloria, and Anne to Johnnie Mae, says she originally concentrated on just finding a friend for an isolated person. But sometimes that friendship, while itself strong and important, didn't lead to anything else. Or the friend moved away, or died, and the isolated person remained just as isolated as before. Now, she says, she looks for friends who are themselves well connected, so that they can open doors for their new friend into the life of the community.

This process is important not just because it multiplies the possibilities for the isolated person: it also keeps bringing the disabled person into situations that are *not* about disability. The social service system, after all, focuses exclusively on the disability — and that's what makes it isolating. When George joins a political campaign, however, or Terry helps coach little league, or Loretta makes pies for the Christmas bake sale, they're part of an effort that is not centered around them or their disability, but some broader social purpose: and that's healthy.

Contrast that kind of involvement with "special" recreation programs and "special" education programs and "special" church services — and you begin to understand Jo's exasperation at all the "special" programs extended to her son. "God bless my soul, he's not *special* — he's special to me and to those who live with him, but he's really just a human being like anyone else. I wish people could just let him live his life."



## Give People Space to Solve Their Own Problems

Each new immigrant group in America always faces problems. Their language sounds strange, their food smells different, their women dress in exotic clothes; and the immigrants themselves find American ways baffling, or funny, or just plain rude. Such tensions are never completely resolved — but it's the popular conviction that American society is better off because of the diversity.

People with disabilities are not immigrants but more like strangers or returning exiles. They have been so isolated that community folks are living segregated lives: we seldom run across people who can't walk or hear or function independently. So we don't know how to live with the differences — they make us uncomfortable.

The only way to overcome these barriers is for people on both sides to face them directly and create their own solutions. And they must have the space to do that. That can't happen as long as disabled people are isolated. There's no substitute for living in a real apartment, in a real neighborhood, with real neighbors, participating in real activities along with everyone else, and sorting out the differences as they come up.

People who do this kind of work tell of their anxiety when problems arise: they feel they have to step in and “fix” things. But then, typically, they find that someone else has already figured out a matter-of-fact solution.

Gary, for example, goes to a pet store every afternoon to feed the animals. His coworkers found out he was helping himself to free Coke and candy — he didn't understand that he was supposed to leave the money in a box. While Kathy, the human service worker, was trying to figure out how to “fix” this, Wilma, the manager, said, “Oh, don't worry, we just close the door to keep him out of there — no problem.”

Paulette, who helped out at the daycare center, had bladder problems that led to occasional accidents. Not to worry, said the woman who ran the center; we can take care of that.

Bob liked to sit next to women at church and touch them on the arm. It was his way of expressing sexual attraction — but needless to say it made the women uncomfortable. The men in the congregation noticed what was going on and agreed to take turns sitting next to Bob to help keep his mind on the Lord and not on the ladies.

Not all problems are solved so easily, of course. (We'll talk about some of the tougher ones in a later section.) But no problems will be solved unless people take a crack at them. And people who do this work have seen other people take on some truly overwhelming problems and find some way to muddle through.



### **Don't Look for Absolute Guarantees, or Absolute Security**

How do you know when you've found the “perfect” solution?

You don't, because there isn't one. Systems and programs pretend to offer absolute solu-



tions. But people who do this work know they can't offer *any* absolutes. Some people reject what you're trying to do, or aren't interested, or are too busy. Others are willing to go along, but only partway. Or some get involved, but only for a time, then lose interest. You worry: what happens over the long term? Can I really trust this community to care about this person — or should I go back to the security of the system?

Everybody who's done this work has faced these questions; here are some of their answers:

You don't have all the answers. Community is messy.

You've got to take risks. We're shifting out of a world of knowns, into a world of unknowns. Sometimes everything seems dark, but sometimes there are sparks of wisdom.

You have to trust the process. You have to accept that maybe there are some places where people fall to grief. You have to hope someone will be there to pick up the pieces. Otherwise, if you look for ironclad guarantees, you'll recreate the system. And I've done that enough already.



### **Be Willing to Let Go**

We've talked about letting people solve their own problems, about resisting the search for absolute guarantees. Sometimes the only way to let that happen is to *let go*. Best way to make this point is another story.

Harold lives in a group home and works in a sheltered workshop, but is really a more public guy, the kind of guy who "likes to go out and whoop it up." Cathy decided he might enjoy going out to a local bar, Frenchies, the night the banjo group was playing. Everything went fine: Harold dressed up in his best clothes, and Cathy and Bruce took him to Frenchies, where they all had a great time.

Until Harold suddenly announced: "I'm gonna go up there and sing."

Cathy wasn't sure Harold could sing — he can't really talk all that clearly, she says. "The old service provider in me came out. I was sure he was going to embarrass himself." She tried to talk him out of it. Nothing doing: he was determined to sing. Up to the stage he strode.

The bandleader, at first puzzled, gamely asked him to pick a tune, and the band started to play. "Harold sang. He sounded just awful. I was glad

when it was over. But everyone clapped, and I figured we'd got through it okay." Cathy relaxed and waited for Harold to get back to the table. Then Harold announced "I'm gonna sing another one." Oh, no, thought Cathy. Bruce, sitting next to her, called out: "One song is enough."

The room went silent for a moment. Then, from a crowded table up front, a woman turned around and glared at Cathy and Bruce: "Oh, leave him alone. He's doing just fine."

Harold sang his second song, and the people in the crowd sang along. After that, other people stood up and sang (and, says Cathy, they *all* sounded terrible"). "Harold made a lot of friends that night," says Cathy. "And Bruce and I made a lot of enemies."

*In community,  
relationships are reciprocal.*



## Watching the Bottom Line

Millions of dollars are spent each year on institutions and services for disabled people. But too often that money is spent in ways that *only further disable people and communities* — by weakening their capacities and isolating them from each other.

Returning disabled people to community doesn't make the need to spend money go away. Judith readily acknowledges that without paid attendant care, she would die. But Judith, with the aid of the Joshua Committee, has designed a flexible attendant care system that costs *less* than what her previous living arrangement in the hospital cost — and meets her needs far better. To Judith, there's no point in pretending that people with disabilities don't need some help: "We need help: but the question is how to get it in a way that doesn't end up controlling our lives."

How indeed?

How should money be spent to make this work easier?

*One way* is to pay for the kind of help Judith has: that does the nitty-gritty work of cooking, housekeeping, keeping her clean and groomed, helping her with transportation. None of this work is especially high skilled, and it need not be expensive: Judith describes its most important characteristic as the "gentle" help of others.

Betty has found all kinds of imaginative ways to get people involved in helping others stay a part of her community. She insists, however, that the bottom line is using money to pay for keeping the person and the house clean. Pay for housekeeping, and for help with toileting and other personal needs, she says, and people will do everything else for free: "as long as they know that if they come over for tea they don't have to stay to clean the oven."

*A second way* money could be spent is to pay someone to be the bridgebuilder, the person who opens the doors. Many of the people who do this work are paid to do it — we described some of them in the second section. Their work carries great tension, because there's always the pressure to turn it into a program that can be measured and evaluated and replicated. Some people are skeptical whether you can pay anyone to do this without risking reintroducing the social service system under the guise of community life.

*A third way* to spend money is to give it directly to disabled people (and/or their families) and let them make their own decisions for its use. Such an approach would introduce the discipline of the market to services for the disabled. Instead of people being matched to programs, the idea is that services would be created to respond to their specific desires. Jo advocates this approach (along with assistance for families in helping to identify appropriate resources).

## Things Can Go Wrong

Loretta baking her cookies, Rebecca doing dishes at Marlene's Diner, Harold standing up at Frenchies to sing his song: This book is full of success stories.

But this work carries worries and disappointments and failures, too. Trying something new (even something that connects with older traditions) is always risky. You're on your own, without the security of programs and guidelines, making things up as you go along, relying on the grace and goodwill of others. And the stakes are high. Judith and Pat — who both know firsthand — insist that “people are dying” because of the heartbreaking isolation in which they're trapped.

Let's look at some of the dangers and difficulties that arise in trying to break that isolation.

### 1. *Some people will reject labeled people.*

Fewer than you'd think to start with, but it does happen. The kinds of differences we talked about earlier — the inability to talk, or go to the bathroom, or move about freely, or express your feelings in socially acceptable ways — these differences can make some people uncomfortable, even frightened.

Pete, for example, used to hang out at the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce in his small town, where he was the unofficial “greeter.” Folks were used to him, until one day the secretary was sick and the wife of the Chamber president substituted for the day. It didn't take her long to decide Pete had to go: “How can you stand him? I don't want him here.” Her husband bowed to her wishes, and Pete was no longer welcome at the Chamber of Commerce.

Pete didn't do anything to this woman to deserve her dislike. She simply felt uncomfortable around him, and she had the clout to make her wishes take precedence. One sad consequence of the isolation of disabled people is that the rest of us lead segregated lives. We are unused to being around people who can't talk or walk like everyone else, or who act in unusual ways. Our unfamiliarity makes us uncomfortable. Some people won't make the effort to overcome their unfamiliarity: they reject what they don't understand.

Sometimes also, a person will behave in ways that others find disturbing. Frequently, the problem boils down to sex (more evidence that people with disabilities are not so different from the rest of us!). At the police station, where he also spent time, Pete told the secretary, “I love you, and I want to be the father of your children. I dream about you every night.” The secretary handled this easily enough — she told Pete she already has a boyfriend. But others are disturbed by unwanted sexual attention, especially if it involves touching. Other kinds of behavior are less personally threatening but may be distracting in busy, task-oriented settings like offices and workplaces.

There's no one answer to such problems; they fall into the category of things that have to be worked out by the people involved. Retreating into isolation is no answer, however, since the segregation of disabled and nondisabled people is at the heart of this problem in the first place.

2. *Some people and their families don't want what you're offering.*

Everybody has stories like this.

Pat tells of his friend, Paul, who spent time in an institution, then a group home, then moved to Ontario looking for some independent life, but who “couldn't get out of the idea of being on a *program*— he's a very programmed person.” Pat worries that Paul, with his past history of violence, is in danger of being sent back to the institution — “and that,” says Pat, “will surely kill him.” But Pat can't offer the “program” to help Paul break free.

Judith tells of Lucy, who was in an institution for the criminally insane. “We started plotting ways for her to be outside, to be in the city. But she said: ‘You're gonna keep me out? Just try it!’ And there was no way we twelve people — we're only human, after all — could keep her out.”

And Jo tells of a very bright woman recently out of an institution, whom Jo tried to help. “We got her job after job; she threw then all up. Today she's a bag lady in Vancouver, and gets her food from garbage. It makes us sick. But there's nothing we can do.”

Jo adds words that speak for the others: “One of the hardest things is to walk away when other people make choices like that.”

3. *Sometimes relationships won't last.*

Programs and services seem to go on forever. But in the real world people and relationships are constantly changing. Marriages break up, old friends grow apart, neighbors move away, relatives grow sick and die. How can anyone hope to build security out of such fragile material?

This question, of course, is not unique to people with disabilities; it's the fundamental human question that underlies every drama from Shakespeare to soap operas. But it is especially acute for people who must depend on others in major ways. Can friendships like the ones described here survive a crisis, when the need for help suddenly becomes much greater? Can they survive changes (divorce, illness, family problems) in either person's life? Can they survive over time, so that they become something to build a lifetime's expectation around?

Again, there's no way in advance to know.

There are two ways to seek reassurance.

One, which we talked about above, is to keep looking for ways to create new relationships that in turn open out onto other relationships, so that no one relationship carries the whole burden of sustaining a person's life.

The other is to keep remembering the alternative. There may not be much security in other people, but it's finally the only security worth having. Judith remembers that the “security” of the hospital was killing her: “I had to decide whether I belonged to the people who are living or to the people who are dead. People have to make those choices.”

4. *Perhaps communities won't finally take responsibility.*

How much can you expect one person, or group of people, to do for or with another, especially one to whom they're not related? Even people who are open-hearted and generous have their limits. They may be willing to spend time with the disabled person and enjoy his friendship, but that's as far as it goes. Ask them to get involved in making decisions about where he should live or how his money should be spent, and they balk: surely this is Somebody Else's Problem. "Community is so loose and fragile," worries Peter. "They may be there to take him fishing. But they won't be there when he has his fifteenth seizure."

People who do this work out of social service agencies particularly find this kind of response coming back at them:

Why are you asking *me* what to do about her? Isn't that what *you* get paid for? Social services were created, after all, to *take care* of people like her. I have no training for this.

This kind of response really gets to the heart of the problem about social services and communities. You don't need training, after all, to be a friend; and a good deal of very important help is a natural outgrowth of friendship, rather than a formal assignment of responsibility.

5. *Perhaps this kind of work is only an illusion; perhaps it really recreates the system within the boundaries of the community.*

People who do the kind of work described here recognize the temptation of recreating a system they started out fighting against. The danger arises when you have some small successes and start looking for ways to expand and evaluate and codify and fund and publicize and ... institutionalize what you're doing. You find yourself creating a regimented, systematized way of doing things.

But the danger is probably even more acute at moments of failure: when you're struggling to solve the problems described in this chapter, trying to create long-term security and formal lines of responsibility for people at risk. Says Dave, "If we go for guarantees, if we keep trying to make sure we have the *right* outcome, we recreate the system."

This tension is fundamental to this work; everyone who does it struggles with it. How do you know when you're recreating the system instead of freeing people from it?

Again, there's no solution. But in this context it's worth drawing some clear distinctions between *organized service systems* and *the free space of human relationships called community*.

In a social service system  
people are known by what's wrong: by their condition or label  
In community  
people are known as individuals.

In a system  
people are incomplete and need to be changed or "fixed"

In community

people are as they are, with opportunities to follow their own dreams.

In a system

relationships are unequal; service workers do things “for” clients and don’t look for any contribution in return

In community

relationships are reciprocal, give and take; and the diverse gifts of many people are recognized

In a system

people are broken into parts and separated into groups

In community

people have the chance to be accepted as whole persons, and viewed as part of the whole society

In a system

problems are solved by consulting authorities, policies, procedures

In community

people seek answers from their own experience and the wisdom of others

In a system

there is no room to acknowledge mistakes and uncertainty; information is communicated in professional jargon that distances individuals from their actions

In community

people can make honest efforts and acknowledge honest mistakes and fears

In a system

all problems have a rational solution

In community

there is room for confusion, and mystery, and a recognition that some things are beyond human control

Community, finally, is no different, for people with disabilities than for any of the rest of us. It’s the free space where people think for themselves, dream their dreams, and come together to create and celebrate their common humanity.



## Roses and Arm Wrestling

If you've got this far — or even if you're one of those people who skip the text and go straight for the conclusion — you may be asking the bottom line question: What's all this got to do with me? After all, I don't know anybody who's disabled, or retarded, or whatever. I pay my taxes and give to charities that are supposed to help such folks — but I'm not going to make a life's work out of it. So what's it got to do with me, my family, my community?

*"I don't know anybody who's retarded."* Give it a little more reflection, and you'll probably realize you do: the little girl down the street with Downs syndrome, or the second cousin who's spent most of his life in and out of institutions, or the son of a coworker who's confined to a wheelchair because of cerebral palsy.

But it's easy to forget about these people, because they have so little place in our lives. We have little casual interaction with them. Our children don't grow up playing with them. We've lost our belief in our ability to respond to them. We've bought the line that they're "better off" in institutions "where they know what to do for these people."

And that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The less time we spend around such people, the less we understand them, the more uncomfortable we feel in dealing with them, the less competent we are *in fact* at responding to them. "Everytime we allow someone to be lost to the institution," says Frankie, "the community loses some of its power."

It loses power to deal, not only with people who are born different, but also with "normal" people at different stages of their lives. You only have to extend the definitions a little distance to include people who become disabled through strokes, accidents, disease. Such calamities touch every family: they are part of the universal human experience. But it gets harder and harder to respond to them within the context of family and community. To quote Frankie again: "We've lost the ability to care for our own." And in the process we have created a grim future for ourselves.

*"What's in it for me?"* But this work isn't only about responsibilities; it's also about gifts. Without exception, the people described here bring something to those whose lives they touch. The people who choose to get to know them find their lives changed, softened, enriched. Judith goes so far as to say, "I secretly believe we're there to create the possibility of love in that way."

Kathy once asked some of the people who got to know people like Rebecca at Marlene's Diner, or Gary at the pet store, what they thought they got out of the experience. These were some of their answers:

We've come to respect and enjoy her as a person.

I believe that it enriches our community and makes us more understanding people.

The quality of love and understanding comes to me and the others in our shop by having her here.



I think perseverance is a definite asset that I, as well as others, have learned from him in the time he has been here. Everyday there is more and more improvement.

She is one of us, we don't think of her any other way. She can do just about anything we do except read or write, but she has the same feelings.

Many qualities come to mind: togetherness, sharing, helpfulness, but the most important is the quality of accomplishment. When you see what he can do with a little help and understanding, you believe anyone can accomplish anything when they set their minds to it.

A recent article by the syndicated columnist Roger Simon tells, in a small way, how such gifts are given, even to those who at first aren't willing to receive them:

Simon was flying in an airplane section with several empty seats, when a stewardess came in leading a small, lively boy who clearly couldn't hear. The passengers (including Simon) busied themselves so they wouldn't get stuck sitting next to the boy; Simon lost. His early attempts to ignore his seatmate failed. The boy was intent on making contact, and slapped him on the arm to get his attention. "At first, it bothered me a little. Strangers don't touch us." But the boy didn't give up; Simon wasn't a hopeless case.

"By the end of the flight, we were arm wrestling." Not just messing around, either, but following the official arm wrestling rules which the boy knew but Simon didn't. And they were making conversation too: "The kid was old enough to realize that not everybody knew sign language, but young enough to believe that the fault was mine, not his. He didn't know he was handicapped. He thought I was."

After two hours of wrestling, conversation, dramatic gestures, laughter and general boisterous activity, the flight landed and the kid ran off to find his parents. And left Simon musing: "I wanted to tell [his parents] that I had been prepared to spend two hours being patient with their kid and I had found out he was prepared to spend two hours being patient with me. I don't know if his folks asked him about the flight, but if they did he probably told them about sitting next to this handicapped guy on the plane. How the guy was a little slow. But he was learning."

Life is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived.

— M. Scott Peck, *A Different Drum*

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

— Old Testament  
quoted in New Testament  
quoted by Jean Vanier

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