

# THE G.O.A.L. POST

Volume 3, Issue 1

Giving Obsessive-Compulsives Another Lifestyle

Spring 2001



The Newsletter of the Philadelphia Affiliate of the National OC Foundation

[to familiarize the public with OCD and OCD spectrum disorders, to educate and encourage those affected, and to promote understanding among their families, colleagues and friends]



"VERY SUPERSTITIOUS ..."

by Fred Penzel, Ph.D.

*(Dr. Penzel is a licensed psychologist who has been involved in the treatment of OCD for over seventeen years. He is the executive director of Western Suffolk Psychological Services in Huntington, New York, and sits on the scientific advisory boards of both the Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation and the Trichotillomania Learning Center. He is a frequent contributor to the OCF newsletter, from the December 1993 issue of which the following article is reprinted.)*

Together with morbid obsessions, a subject which I have previously written about, magical and superstitious thinking make up one of the stranger and more misunderstood aspects of OCD. When my patients try to describe their symptoms, they preface their explanation with—"I know this sounds crazy, but . . . ." The presence of magical thinking is probably the main reason why many with OCD have been misdiagnosed over the years as schizophrenic. Superstitious thinking makes strange and magical connections between things which logically don't seem to connect in the real world—thus the apparent 'craziness.' Some common examples would be the idea that thinking of an unlucky number can

ruin your day, that clothing you wore to a funeral can lead to more unhappiness if you wear it again, or that thinking of the name of a disease will cause you or someone else to get that disease.

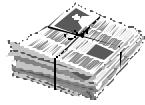
Magic and superstition are as old as the human race. They have represented a way for us to try to explain the normally unexplainable and to try to control the seemingly uncontrollable. They have therefore always held great allure and attraction. One might go as far as to say that there is a human tendency to think superstitiously. Just look, for example, at people playing their 'lucky' lottery numbers or reading horoscopes to guide their lives. Clearly, OCD does not have a monopoly on such thinking.

*(continued on page 3, column 2)*



Vincent van Gogh's *The Sower*, courtesy of [www.vangoghgallery.com](http://www.vangoghgallery.com)

**THE  
PHILADELPHIA  
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OBSESSIVE-  
COMPULSIVE  
FOUNDATION**



## MY TREATMENT AS A NEWSPAPER HOARDER

by Marvin Mick, former member of the G.O.A.L. Support Group

I have lived a lifetime (over 50 years) obsessively hoarding papers and scrupulously guarding my hoard. Over the years I have been the butt of good-natured teasing, received kindly offered suggestions about how to handle this, and heard feelings of disgust expressed by others. One couple even helped me in my hoarding by saving their papers for me.

I have amassed a huge collection of newspapers, magazines, and unlabeled VCR tapes. Even though I was afraid that my silverfish would starve (I can't afford goldfish), I began treatment with a therapist, who claimed I was afflicted with obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The good news was that there were "magic pills" available that could treat the chemical imbalance that is a factor in my disorder. The bad news was that my cardiologist, gastroenterologist, and cardiac prevention specialist already had prescribed the maximum number of pills I was allowed to consume in a day. Therefore, unless I could cure one of my physical ailments, I would not be allowed to take any additional medication (not even Viagra). What a quandary!

My therapist convinced me that I would have to live with obsessive-compulsive disorder for the rest of my life, but he told me that if I was willing to apply myself, I could turn this negative disorder into something positive. Since OCD manifests itself in many different ways and since I was unwilling to become a hypochondriac, my wife gave me a list of obsessive-compulsive behaviors that she considered more acceptable to our lifestyle. I chose checking, perfectionism, and cleanliness, since I always envied people who were orderly, organized, and clean. I knew that the transition would not be easy.

My therapist promised to teach me how to retrieve 100 newspapers a day from the Internet onto a wafer-thin disc, smaller than a music CD. He promised me that if I mastered that, he would teach me how to save any movie, opera, video, or recording in a similar manner. The only trouble was that in my mind, this would enable me to access anything I desired instantly. That would take away the fun of knowing that when I wanted to find something, I might have the pleasure of looking through 16 piles of old papers and still come up empty-handed.

Just to prove to myself how much more pleasurable being a perfectionist, checker, and obsessive cleaner would be, my therapist encouraged me to "take baby steps" in that direction. One assignment from my therapist was to "clean out" my station wagon, which was filthy and completely full of old newspapers. He challenged me to complete this in one week. If I had difficulty accomplishing it, he would "send me a crew of people he knew who liked to be helpful and clean up." After considering this alternative, my wagon was washed and cleaned out within the time allotted (it hadn't looked as good since I bought it in 1994). I even reached the stage where I was attempting to discard the previous week's newspapers every Friday and was beginning to throw out a hoard of newspapers in my garage. My poor wife is now terrified and has begun her own sessions with my therapist. Hopefully, she'll be able to take the medication.

In recent months, family and friends began to await eagerly tales of my exploits with my "newspaper doctor." My wife, friends, and even I are truly amazed at the progress I made over the course of approximately six months.

*[Marvin Mick died suddenly on August 23, 2000. His family and friends were thrilled that he lived his last six months with newfound freedom from the obsession which had plagued him throughout his life. This article was edited posthumously by Marvin's wife Millie and his son Joel.]* ○

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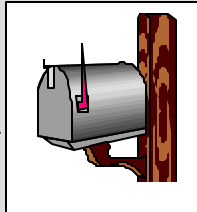
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The G.O.A.L. Post would like to receive your submissions. It is Looking for stories, poems, essays, questions for its professionals, and artwork. Subject matter may relate personal victories, personal defeats dealt with meaningfully, insights, strategies, sources of strength, humor, etc. Writings submitted should be literate (correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.), legible (typed, preferably), and of a reasonable length. All submissions accepted for publication are subject to editorial changes and must be properly attributed to their creators, who will be identified in the newsletter unless they request otherwise. No submissions will be returned. Send them to:

**Jene Beardsley, Editor**  
**P. O. Box 62384**  
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The Deadline for the summer issue is **MAY 1**.

**"VERY SUPERSTITIOUS . . ."** (continued from page 1, column 2)

There are limits, however. The average person can find a place for a little superstition without it taking over and causing him or her to be unable to function. Even members of primitive societies, where magic dominates most important decisions, can tolerate its presence without becoming paralyzed by it. It is used as a tool and a guide. In OCD, we see magical thinking run amok and out of control. Once it establishes itself as a symptom, it can grow like a cancer, starting as a way to relieve anxiety and expanding to become the sufferer's chief occupation and the cause of even greater anxieties than it was supposed to relieve.

There is currently no scientific explanation as to why some individuals tend to have these particular symptoms compared to any others. Many of those with OCD are constantly bombarded with very strange and doubtful thoughts about harm coming to themselves and/or others. Sufferers thus may feel that they cannot resort to ordinary protective measures because of these extraordinary threats. Their world seems out of the range of normal control. They therefore turn to magic as the only other viable alternative as a way of restoring a feeling of control.

One other possible influence upon the development of magical thinking may be if an individual with OCD comes from a culture in which superstition plays a strong role. Coming from such a background cannot, of course, cause OCD; however, it can certainly help give someone at risk a push in the wrong direction if everyone at home is doing magical rituals.

As we know, an obsession is any thought that causes anxiety, and a compulsion can be any action, either mental or physical, which relieves it. Obsessive thoughts generally tell sufferers that something harmful is happening or will happen to themselves or someone else. Magical thinkers generally obsess about many of the same types of threats that other sufferers do—they themselves or others dying or becoming ill or disabled, being 'cursed,' having bad luck, being blasphemous or sinful, going to hell, getting into trouble, or deliberately or accidentally harming others in some way, etc. The list could be much longer if there were space. The thoughts don't simply stop with a bad consequence being revealed to the thinker. They would otherwise be no different from morbid obsessive thoughts. What distinguishes them is that they are also (as mentioned earlier) connected with some type of magical cause or attribution. Whether magical thinkers make this attribution themselves or whether it is part of the obsession itself, is unclear. They come to believe, for instance, that the harm can be brought about by unlucky numbers or their multiples, by simply hearing about bad things happening to others, by thinking about or seeing certain words or images, by carrying out (or forgetting) certain actions or behaviors, by unlucky colors, by being 'possessed,' or by contact with

(continued on page 7)



# RULES

By Erin Skienzielewski, member of the G.O.A.L. Support Group

In society we need rules; lack of them would cause confusion and chaos. But in the OCD patient, rules abound at such a rate, causing the actual illness they were aimed at preventing.

For instance, a washer might think that if he touches something contaminated, he must wash his hands. This is a rule he imposes on himself. But this rule is the catalyst for his hand-washing rituals. Next come more rules, whether they be with more washing, checking, or whatever OC symptom comes down the pike.

So what is the real answer here? Sometimes a person may experience that he gets relief from one symptom, only to find that the focal point of his rules has shifted and thus created another symptom/ritual.

My OCD began when I was about two, and it became full-blown at age twelve. Now at age 22, I'd like to say there's been a period of remission, but the truth of the matter is that I've just been trudging along, fighting symptoms. I choose to bring up my struggle at this point because there are so many rules to which I adhere. I believe that if I just let go of some of these nonsensical regulations, my life would be a whole lot better, and I'd see a great reduction in my OC symptoms. ○

The Philadelphia Affiliate of the National Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation serves as a clearing-house for information on the obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and provides the following free professionally assisted support groups for those with the disorder.

**The G.O.A.L. Support Group of Philadelphia is meeting at 8 PM every other Wednesday in the Anxiety and Agoraphobia Treatment Center, 112 Bala Avenue, Bala Cynwyd. A family group is meeting in the Center at the same time. For more information on the G.O.A.L. Group, telephone Gayle Frankel at 610-660-0549. For more information on the family group, telephone Sally Allen at 610-525-1510. As an extension of the G.O.A.L. Group, a new Center-City OCD support group is meeting from 12:30 to 2 PM on the second Thursday of each month in Suite 829H of the Lewis Tower Building, 225 South 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia. For more information on this group, telephone Gayle Frankel at her number given above.**

**A support group for young people is meeting every other Thursday from 7 to 8 PM in Suite 9 of the Rosemont Plaza Apartments, 1062 Lancaster Avenue, Rosemont. For more information, telephone Judy Kolman at 610-525-1510.**

**AATC staff member Dr. Lee Fitzgibbons is conducting at the Center a support group for children with OC and other fears. For more information, telephone her at (610) 667-6490, Extension 22.**

**The Trichotillomania Support Group is meeting on alternate Wednesdays from 6:30 to 7:45 PM in Suite 9 of the Rosemont Plaza Apartments, 1062 Lancaster Avenue, Rosemont. For more information, telephone Sally Allen at 610-525-1510.**

#### DID YOU KNOW THAT . . .

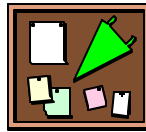
When surgeons scrub before operating, they remove or kill many of the bacteria on the surface of their skin. But the more they scrub, the more they dredge up new bacteria from within the epithelium, so there is a point of diminishing returns.

--From an article in *Field and Stream* by Lionel Atwill

 From Pat Summers

**Member of the GOAL Support Group**

*When God puts a burden upon you, He puts His own arm underneath. God is directing the course of our lives. No matter what opposition you face, He is in it with you. He is the one responsible for your protection and for giving you the ability to accomplish the goals He has helped you set.*




## BULLETIN BOARD

- ❑ Forthcoming meetings of the G.O.A.L. Support Group through the spring will be on the following Wednesdays at 8 PM.

April 4	May 2	June 13
April 18	May 16	June 27
	May 30	

- ❑ For bad-weather and other emergency cancellations of meetings of the G.O.A.L. Support Group, tune in to KYW radio, or after 12:30 noon call the Affiliate's voice mail at extension 26 of the AATC's telephone number: 610-667-6490.
- ❑ The Affiliate will be holding a flea market on Sunday, May 6. If you have any items in good condition to donate for this event, see Gayle Frankel.
- ❑ The 2001 Summer Camping Trip for the G.O.A.L. Support Group will take place from Friday to Sunday, June 22 to 24. If you are interested in participating, see Jon Grayson.
- ❑ The 2001 Conference of the National Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation will occur in Denver, Colorado, this year. The dates are Friday to Sunday, July 20 to 22. See Jon Grayson or Gayle Frankel for further information.
- ❑ The Affiliate is planning its own conference to be held some time this fall. Its subject is "Children and OCD." Watch for further announcements.
- ❑ Here are two ways in which you can support the Affiliate financially.

 Join the National OCF. The Affiliate receives financial credit for each new member.

 Save your Genuardi's tapes. The Affiliate receives a dollar for every one hundred dollars on these receipts.



**Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus  
(AD 40 - 81)**

## THE ROMAN EMPEROR TITUS DID HE HAVE OCD?

*By Rabbi David C. Novitsky,  
Member of the G.O.A.L. Support Group*

Titus Flavius Vespasianus was Roman emperor during the brief and turbulent period of 79-81 AD. He was the emperor when Mount Vesuvius erupted and buried Pompeii. And it was he who completed the amphitheater known as the Coliseum. Despite his short life of 41 years, his impact on history has lasted through the present.

Titus is well known for his persecution of Jews and early Christians, but in this respect he is most notorious as the military leader who undertook the siege of Jerusalem. He took advantage of the violent factional strife and internal disharmony among the Jews at that time and after a long siege of the city captured it. In August 70 AD—before he was emperor—he and his four legions burned the Holy Temple in Jerusalem to the ground, butchered countless prisoners, took many captives, and initiated the nearly two-millennium exile of the Jewish people known as the Diaspora. Still standing at the entrance to the Roman Forum, the Arch of Titus was erected by Titus's younger brother and successor, Domitian, to commemorate Titus's brutal destruction of the Temple and looting of its treasures. The only architectural survivor of this destruction is that Jewish holy place, the Wailing Wall.

In addition to related disorders such as hoarding and depression, Titus may have suffered from extremely intrusive obsessions, and it appears that he resorted to very elaborate and time-consuming compulsions to relieve the excruciating anxiety generated by these obsessions. As always in OCD, his attempts to stop these obsessions with compulsive rituals only aggravated his condition and increased his anxiety.

Titus's addiction to extensive bathing before eating points to an obsession with contamination. He seems also to have suffered from some form of "pure obsession" that constantly banged in his head. One day he found relief from this when he passed a blacksmith's shop and heard the sound of a hammer banging. Suddenly the banging of his obsessive thoughts ceased. Every day for a time, therefore, he had a blacksmith brought to him who hammered before him. It is said that if the blacksmith was a non-Jew, he was paid, but if he was a Jew, Titus said: "It is enough that you see the suffering of your enemy." Probably because of the severity of the neurological basis of his disorder, the success of this treatment did not last, but nonetheless Titus seems to have stumbled on one of the most effective therapies

for OCD, cognitive behavioral therapy, that if you want to think about something less, you must think about it more: only by having more contact with his intrusive thoughts in the form of a blacksmith's hammering was he able to gain more control of his mind and habituate to his anxiety. The banging of the blacksmith's hammer suggests itself as a predecessor to the loop tapes of today which allow one to expose himself or herself to unwanted obsessions in order to reduce them.

During the last fourteen months of his two-year tenure as emperor, Titus, like Howard Hughes, lived as a recluse and accomplished virtually nothing until his premature demise in AD 81 in his early forties. Unfortunately, he left instructions that at his death his subordinates were to burn him and scatter his ashes over the seven seas so that the G-D of the Jews could not find him and bring him to trial. Consequently, we cannot know with certainty what was happening inside the brain of this man. There are, however, one or two interesting clues to the cause of his condition.

The first clue is that Titus apparently made many trips to the very cold springs at Cutilae (in Italy) and bathed in snow to relieve the symptoms of a high fever which might have been caused by Sydenham Chorea, a streptococcal infection which attacks the basal ganglia of the brain and has been implicated as a possible cause of OCD.

The second clue requires a little context. Because of his completion of the Coliseum and his humane attempts to relieve the suffering of the Vesuvius disaster of AD 79, of a fire in Rome that burned for three days and three nights in AD 80, and of a severe plague that followed, Titus became a popular emperor at home, but nonetheless his blasphemy and brutality toward the Jewish people have given him an outstanding place in the history of infamy. The Babylonian Talmud records that during his siege of Jerusalem, in behavior that suggests compulsive ritualizing he took a prostitute by force, and entering the holiest place in Judaism, the Temple's Holy of Holies, he spread out on the altar a Torah scroll of Law and on it engaged in sex. It records that he took a sword and slashed the curtain of the Holy of Holies and then used it as a basket for all the vessels he gathered from the Temple to ship them to Rome where he exhibited them as a collection. The Talmud observes that even though the destruction of the Temple was foretold by G-D in the Old Testament, the extreme contempt Titus had for the Jewish people and for G-D necessitated some sort of severe punishment. It suggests that G-D sent his most miniscule creature, a mosquito, to enter his brain and remain there for seven years. It mentions also that a Rabbi Phineas, the son of Aruva, was present when an autopsy was conducted on the emperor and witnessed something like a brain tumor in the shape of a sparrow, pigeon, or dove. A benign tumor of the basal ganglion or thalamus region of the brain which grew for several years may be the cause of his OCD and later his death. ○

A doctor says to his patient, "I have good news and bad news. The good news is that you are not a hypochondriac."



A man rushed into the doctor's office and shouted, "Doctor! I think I'm shrinking!" The doctor calmly responded, "Now, settle down. You'll just have to be a little patient."



signs and notices written in English throughout the world



- In a Tokyo Hotel:* **Is forbidden to steal hotel towels please. If you are not a person to do such a thing is please not to read notis.**
- In a Bucharest hotel lobby:* **The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable.**
- In a Leipzig elevator:* **Do not enter lift backwards, and only when lit up.**
- In a Belgrade hotel elevator:* **To move the cabin, push button for wishing floor. If the cabin should enter more persons, each one should press a number of wishing floor. Driving is then going alphabetically by national order.**
- In a Paris hotel elevator:* **Please leave your values at the front desk.**
- In a hotel in Athens:* **Visitors are expected to complain at the office between the hours of 9 and 11 A.M. daily.**
- In a Yugoslavian hotel:* **The flattening of underwear with pleasure is the job of the chambermaid.**
- In a Japanese hotel:* **You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid.**
- In the lobby of a Moscow hotel across from Russian Orthodox monastery:* **You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian and Soviet composers, artists, and writers are buried daily except Thursday.**
- In an Austrian hotel catering to skiers:* **Not to perambulate the corridors during the hours of repose in the boots of ascension.**
- On the menu of a Swiss restaurant:* **Our wines leave you nothing to hope for.**
- On the menu of a Polish hotel:* **Salad a firm's own make; limpid red beet soup with cheesy dumplings in the form of a finger; roasted duck let loose; beef rashers beaten up in the country people's fashion.**
- Outside a Hong Kong tailor shop:* **Ladies may have a fit upstairs.**
- In a Bangkok dry cleaners:* **Drop your trousers here for best results.**
- Outside a Paris dress shop:* **Dresses for street walking.**
- In a Rhodes tailor shop:* **Order your summers suit. Because is big rush we will execute customers in strict rotation.**
- From the Soviet Weekly:* **There will be a Moscow Exhibition of Arts by 150,000 Soviet Republic painters and sculptors. These were executed over the past two years.**
- A sign posted in Germany's Black Forest:* **It is strictly forbidden on our black forest camping site that people of different sex, for instance, men and women, live together in one tent unless they are married with each other for that purpose.**
- In a Zurich hotel:* **Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose.**
- In an advertisement by a Hong Kong dentist:* **Teeth extracted by the latest Methodists.**
- In a Rome laundry:* **Ladies, leave your clothes here and spend the afternoon having a good time.**
- In a Czechoslovakian tourist agency:* **Take one of our horse-driven city tours—we guarantee no miscarriages.**
- Advertisement for donkey rides in Thailand:* **Would you like to ride on your own ass?**
- In a Swiss mountain inn:* **Special today—no ice cream.**
- In a Bangkok temple:* **It is forbidden to enter a woman even a foreigner if dressed as a man.**
- In a Tokyo bar:* **Special cocktails for the ladies with nuts.**
- In a Copenhagen airline ticket office:* **We take your bags and send them in all directions.**
- On the door of a Moscow hotel room:* **If this is your first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it.**
- In a Norwegian cocktail lounge:* **Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar.**
- In a Budapest zoo:* **Please do not feed the animals. If you have any suitable food, give it to the guard on duty.**
- In the office of a Roman doctor:* **Specialist in women and other diseases.**
- In an Acapulco hotel:* **The manager has personally passed all the water served here.**
- In a Tokyo shop:* **Our nylons cost more than common, but you'll find they are best in the long run.**
- From a Japanese information booklet about using a hotel air conditioner:* **Coolers and Heates: If you want just condition of warm in your room, please control yourself.**
- From a brochure of a car rental firm in Tokyo:* **When passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigor.**
- Two signs from a Majorcan shop entrance:* **English well speaking / Here speeching American.**

**"VERY SUPERSTITIOUS . . ."** *(continued from page 3, column 2)*

places, objects, or people associated with unlucky or unhappy occasions. Contact in this last case can be purely mental or physical.

The most basic magical compulsions involve simple avoidance of the magically 'bad' words, numbers, objects, colors, persons, etc. We can call this avoidance magical because it is done in response to magical obsessions. Beyond avoidance is control. Perhaps because the harm is thought to have magical origins, the compulsions sufferers invent to control it are frequently also magical. There are more complex types of magical compulsions which resemble the practice of ancient magic, and they tend to follow strict rules or precise steps, which if not performed perfectly must be repeated. We commonly refer to these as 'rituals.' These types of magic rituals are also referred to as 'undoing rituals.' Magic, as we all know, must be kept 'pure' and perfect if it is to work. Because anxiety typically hampers most people's performances at anything, it is of course difficult for sufferers to get rituals to be perfect. They tend to get the steps wrong, forget something, or have some type of unpleasant obsession or image intrude, thereby 'contaminating' or ruining the magic. When this happens, very high anxiety and depression can result. Unless their obsession allows them to have another chance to make things right, a great deal of careful activity can be ruined in an instant. If it is a ritual that can only be done at a special time or on a special day, the sufferers might not get another chance for as much as a month to try again. I have seen individuals go into deep depressions because midnight rituals done badly on New Year's Eve have spoiled the entire new year.

Because sufferers identify words, numbers, actions, etc., as having magical power to cause harm or bad luck, the magical compulsions which are supposed to undo them are frequently seen to involve the same elements. These rituals are generally used to cancel out or negate the 'bad' magical elements by employing their opposites, such as thinking of health-promoting words in response to thoughts concerning the names of illnesses.

Examples of compulsive magical behaviors I have witnessed would include:

- Repetitive praying or crossing oneself
- Counting up to or beyond certain numbers
- Reciting or thinking of certain words, names, sounds, images, phrases, or numbers
- Moving one's body or gesturing in a special way
- Stepping in special ways or on special spots when walking
- Washing off bad ideas or thoughts
- Arranging objects or possessions in a special order
- Performing physical actions in reverse
- Thinking thoughts in reverse
- Repeating behaviors a special number of times or an odd or even number of times
- Performing behaviors at special times or on particular dates
- Repeating one's own words or the words of others
- Repetitively apologizing to another person or to God
- Gazing at certain numbers or words to cancel others out
- Touching certain things in a special way or a particular number of times

In terms of what can be done to remedy magical obsessions and compulsions, I recommend, as usual, the two-pronged approach of medication plus behavioral therapy. Antidepressant medications (Anafranil, Prozac, Zoloft, or Paxil) can provide a degree of symptom relief, reducing the obsessive thoughts and the urge to do compulsions sufficiently to allow behavioral therapy to help the sufferer overcome the rest of the problem. This is not to say that one cannot be successful without medication; however, it does improve one's chances quite a bit. On the other hand, medication alone usually isn't sufficient to do the job entirely.

By behavioral therapy, I mean specifically Exposure and Response Prevention (E&RP). The person in treatment is gradually encouraged to put himself or herself in a position for the bad luck or harm to occur and then is discouraged from carrying out the avoidance or the magical ritual. It is not that magical thinkers totally believe in their magic. They don't. They do, however, experience serious doubts and need encouragement to take the risks necessary to see that their beliefs aren't justified. These are beliefs that are never challenged. Most of those with OCD generally don't resist long enough to learn that their anxiety would pass even if they did nothing in response to the obsessions. In therapy a listing or hierarchy is created in which all feared situations are ranked in order, usually on a one to ten or a zero to 100 scale. Patients work their way up the scale, gradually tackling more and more difficult items via homework assignments or working with the therapist in the office or on field trips. No one is ever forced to do anything, and nothing is thrown at persons by surprise.

Additional exposure to obsessive thoughts is accomplished via taped presentations, writing assignments, or selected readings. I have found the taped presentations to be of particular value. They are used several times per day and increased in difficulty as the listener's anxiety decreases with presentations. Despite what you may have heard, obsessions can be as effectively treated as compulsions. There are presently some small case studies from Britain which give evidence that this is so. Further scientific study will be needed to confirm this once and for all to convince the doubters. Some people require repeated exposures

*(continued on page 8, column 2)*



# PUNGENT EXTRACTS

"If you love somebody, let them go. If they return, they were always yours. If they don't, they never were."

--Anonymous

"What you are afraid of is a good indication of the next thing you need to do."

--Anonymous

"If you want to test your memory, try to recall what you were worrying about one year ago today."

--Rotarian

"Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known."

--Carl Sagan

"Opportunity may knock only once, but temptation leans on the doorbell."

--Anonymous

"Many an opportunity is lost because a man is out looking for four-leaf clovers."

--Anonymous

"Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognize them."

--Ann Landers

"Let him that hath no power of patience retire within himself, though even there he will have to put up with himself."

--Baltasar Gracian

"Everyone is kneaded out of the same dough but not baked in the same oven."

--Yiddish Proverb

"Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

--St. Francis of Assisi

"Effort only fully releases its reward after a person refuses to quit."

--Napoleon Hill

"Illegitimus non carborundum." (Latin: "Don't let the bastards grind you down.")

--General Joseph Stilwell

"Personality is born out of pain. It is the fire shut up in the flint."

--J. B. Yeats

"Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is."

--Erich Fromm

"Philosophy is a study that lets us be unhappy more intelligently."

--Anonymous

"The stoical scheme of supplying our wants by lopping off our desires, is like cutting off our feet when we want shoes."

--Jonathan Swift

"My advice to you is get married: if you find a good wife you'll be happy; if not, you'll become a philosopher."

--Socrates

"He who controls the past commands the future. He who commands the future conquers the past."

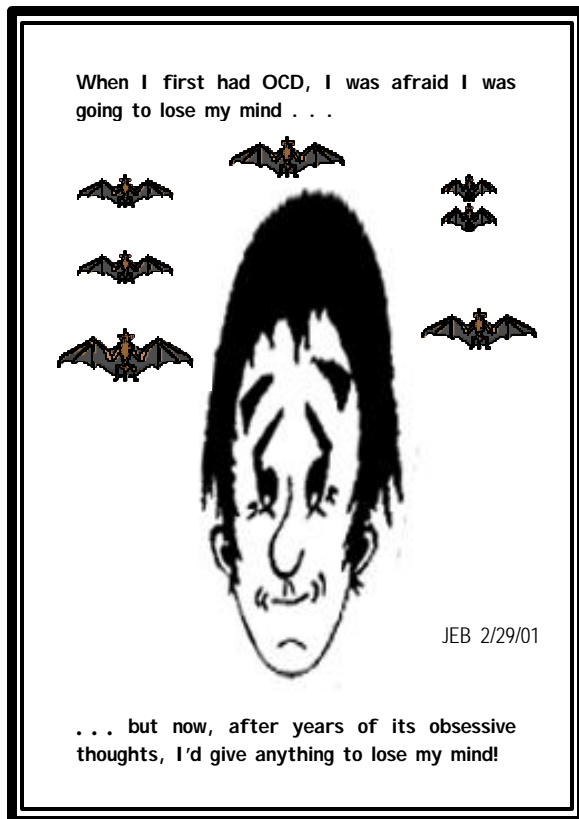
--George Orwell

"VERY SUPERSTITIOUS . . ." (continued from page 7)

to feared situations, and some actually require only one. In this latter case, it is almost as if by facing something feared, the sufferer is breaking a 'spell.' This is not to suggest that therapy is in some way like magic—it isn't. Therapy requires persistent and consistent work.

In this way, confidence is progressively increased, and symptoms are systematically eliminated. The person becomes habituated to the fearful thoughts to the point of no longer having to react to them, even if they do not completely cease. In uncomplicated cases, the process described above should take anywhere from six to twelve months. With individuals who habituate after only one exposure to each feared situation, the process may even be quicker.

If you suffer from magical thoughts and compulsions, my message to you is—don't continue suffering needlessly. Help is available. Call the [Obsessive Compulsive] Foundation for a referral in your area. If you live with a magical thinker, remember he or she is not crazy, just doubtful and anxious and in need of support and encouragement. Ö



**THE G.O.A.L. POST THANKS THE ANONYMOUS DONOR AND NED SAAZ  
WHOSE FINANCIAL SUPPORT HAS MADE POSSIBLE  
THIS SPRING 2001 ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER.**

The next (summer) issue of this publication will be entirely in black and white. We hope to return eventually to the two pages of color we have had up to this point since the winter of 1999, but color is very expensive and an issue using it on only two of its twelve pages costs over \$500 to print for the 150 copies to which we limit ourselves. The Affiliate is a non-profit organization and though the editing of *The G.O.A.L. Post* is done free-of-charge, the printing is very draining of its bank account. Therefore we are looking into ways of subsidizing future issues. If you the reader know of a possible donor or are able to make a contribution yourself, please contact Gayle Frankel (610-660-0549) or Anna Mae Yurkanin (610-539-4608), the co-presidents of the Affiliate. Contributions may be large or small and may be made anonymously. Contact the Co-Presidents also if you know of anyone who would be willing to advertise his or her business or service in the newsletter, as we are planning to raise money for it in this way also. We are grateful for your help.

--Jene Beardsley, Editor

- ◆ Stressed is merely desserts spelled backward.
- ◆ Psychiatrists say that 1 of 4 people are mentally ill. Check 3 friends. If they're OK, you're it.
- ◆ Diplomacy is the art of letting other people have your way.
- ◆ I've always wanted to be normal, but lately I've come to suspect that this is it.
- ◆ Consciousness: that annoying time between naps.
- ◆ A psychotic says, "Two plus two is five." A neurotic says, "Two plus two is four, and I can't stand it."
- ◆ A psychotherapist was having a roaring business since he started from scratch, so much so that he could now afford to have a proper shop banner advertising his services. So he told a kid to paint the sign for him and put it above his shop entrance. But, instead of his business building up, it began to slacken. He had especially noticed the ladies shying away from his shop after reading the sign. So he decided to check it out himself. Then he understood why. The boy had used a small wooden board so he had split the word into the 3 words: **PSYCHO- THE- RAPIST.**



**SUPER ZEROS** By MIKE LUCKOVICH



## THE SPINAL COLUMN



Helping to Give the Reader Backbone



*[The ancient Romans reported that the druids, the priests of the pre-Christian Celts, read the future in the configurations of the entrails of their human sacrifices. Similarly, one may read one's future in one's intestinal fortitude or the lack of it. This truth is dramatized in the following account which is a reworking of the presentation I made as part of the "Recovery Workshop" panel at the 1999 National OC Conference in Arlington, Virginia. -Jene Beardsley]*

By the time fall had begun to drop its first leaves in 1997, I was washing my hands at the kitchen faucet three to five times a minute. These interruptions of normal living, reducing it to the unfulfilling fragments of intervals, were intolerable, and so I turned to my closest friend Mike and gave him the nod to seek for me the help which I felt too incapacitated and still too proudly reluctant to seek directly myself. Through the Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation (OCF) in Connecticut he found Gayle Frankel in Merion, Pennsylvania, the founder and co-president of the Philadelphia Affiliate of the OCF. She in turn directed Mike to therapist Jon Grayson and (as it was called then) the Agoraphobia and Anxiety Treatment Center (the AATC) in Bala Cynwyd, at the western edge of Philadelphia. Gayle's voice, Mike reported to me later, seemed kind. Against the undertow of my disorder and the brutal embarrassment it was to my self-respect, it's a great deal to say that his description of how she sounded was faintly reassuring.

Still, I hung back, but after losing my latest girlfriend on Mischief Night of that fall (she found incomprehensible and insulting that I placed my apartment off-limits to her), I was beginning to realize that the taboo- and ritual-ridden existence I was trying to protect from the disturbance of therapy and the world at large was not worth continuing. And because I'm possessed of a great love for living, I decided to change my life, not take it.

On November 6, an overcast Thursday, Mike and I reconnoitered the treatment center. Because I would not sit in his car and would not let him sit in mine, we drove separately. Halfway there, drops of rain began to appear on my windshield and I became anxious and angry because street water moving cars threw up onto my car was for me like the "spewage" of hell that shot me into hours of cleaning whatever it touched and then some. Nonetheless, after an approximately forty-minute drive, we arrived at the old residential house converted into offices that the AATC shared with other businesses.

We parked our cars on a cemented lot several buildings down and across the street from the center and got out. My mind imagined some of the terrible things that must go on in that house and it looked ominously



contaminated to me even from the outside, but as we stood in the spritzing rain, Mike pointed to it and said: "That is where you're going to get rid of this thing." The side of the house occupied by the center has a sign displaying its name and, to signify liberation from anxiety disorders, the logo of a flying bird. I remember looking at that logo and wondering if birds could fly in the rain.

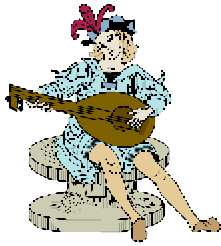
The weeks that followed were spent in further procrastination. Finally, in half-blind daring, I had Mike make an appointment for me with Jon Grayson for the evening of December 16. At that meeting Dr. Grayson agreed to take me as his client.

From this distance in time I don't remember how many, but every appointment he made with me after December 16 until January 22 I broke because the forces of negation that ruled my universe at that time saw to it, as I imagined, that every day I was to see the therapist it rained. But by the last of these cancellations I was angry enough at my bad luck to say to myself: "To hell with the streetwater—consider it an unlikely baptism into a better life." And so January 22 saw me in Dr. Grayson's office at 2 PM. Ironically, it was a cloudless day. The office has several good-sized windows, and at that hour they let in the radiance of the afternoon sun. This light working with a number of plants on or near the window sills gave me the impression of a greenhouse. It seemed a good place for growing. Growing, however, requires dirt.

Three visits later, the preliminaries—putting together for the therapist some background for my disorder and establishing with him a fundamental rapport—ended and in terms of exposures to various kinds of contamination working from the lesser to the greater, a half month of intensive behavioral therapy began. The date, February 12, seemed propitious. It was Lincoln's birthday—he freed the slaves.

Because I've already recounted the various exposures of my therapy in "The Spinal Column" of the Winter 1999 issue of this newsletter, I will write here simply that by the time February was over I had broken the back of the

*(continued on page 11, column 2)*



## A SONG FOR THE THOUGHTFUL



*[This poem was written by Mother Teresa and is engraved on the wall of her home for children in Calcutta.]*

People are often unreasonable,  
illogical and self-centered;  
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind,  
people may accuse you of selfish,  
ulterior motives;  
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful,  
you will win some false friends and  
some true enemies;  
Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank,  
people may cheat you;  
Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building,  
someone could destroy overnight;  
Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness,  
others may be jealous;  
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today,  
people will often forget tomorrow;  
Do good today anyway.

Give the world the best you have,  
and it may never be enough;  
Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis,  
it is between me and God;  
It was never between me and them anyway.

## THE SPINAL COLUMN *(continued from page 10)*

thing. It has, however, the power to grow, vertebra by vertebra, another back, and so I keep watch over it. I also expose myself repeatedly to contamination to strengthen my tolerance of dirt, to keep up-to-date my sense of the ordinariness of being reasonably dirty. This watchfulness and "post-graduate" exposure are what is commonly known as maintenance.

At Jon Grayson's encouragement, on March 11, 1998, I joined the G.O.A.L. Support Group to encourage others to deliver themselves from the obsessive-compulsive disorder. It is in the spirit of this intent that I write this column and close the present installment of it with a few pointed observations.

The American psychologist William James spoke of the "once-born," those who by luck of genes and breeding and circumstance are well-balanced throughout their lives. Most of us, however, need to be born twice. Evangelical Christianity has made the phrase "born again" something of a household term, but in the reality which lies behind the cliché, this fact is incontrovertible, that the first birth occurs through the guts of our mother, the second out of our own guts. **Ö**

**DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in the articles of this newsletter are those of their authors and do not necessarily represent the Philadelphia Affiliate.**

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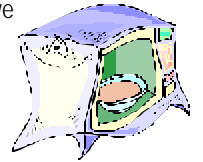
# THE ADVENTURES OF QWERTY YUIOP

by Magic Mumford

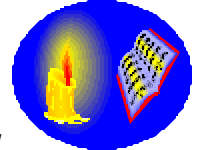
## THE ART OF HUMILIATION



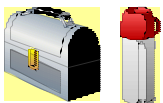
She was an old woman who, to give herself the illusion that she had not arrived a few yards away from the threshold of second childhood, insisted on living independently and never became conscious that her chronic demands on the strangers living around her amounted to assisted living or that the presumption and thanklessness with which she made these demands betrayed her feeling that the world was responsible for her aging and therefore owed her a great debt. A few weeks before, Qwerty had heard her scuffling up and down the hallway in her slippers outside of his locked door like an emphysemic town crier squeezing a little air out of her lungs to rasp repetitively, "Does anyone have any matches? Does anyone have any matches? My pilot light is out." Now she stood half in and half out of her open doorway with a bead on him as, five doors down in the shadowed end of the hallway and late for work, he waited anxiously for the elevator to rise to the eighth floor. In his hand was the tissue he had used to press the up button. He was not by general inclination an unloving person, but he hated people who aggravated his condition. Tempted by the desire to get his first full look at her so that he could dislike her more deliciously, he made the mistake of making eye contact. "Do you know anything about microwaves?" she creaked? His behind-schedule anxiety peaked at the question and with more abruptness than he had wanted to show, he answered, "I don't own a microwave." "I didn't ask you if you *owned* a microwave," she whined with accusing annoyance. "I asked if you knew anything *about* them." "No," he said. In the three-second pause that followed, the elevator door opened and he felt his anxiety swell into another direction toward his mind's image of her doing something vengefully to his apartment door, which stood a little diagonally across the hallway from her door. "I'm terribly sorry," he said in a last-second attempt to present himself as a nice man to whose door she therefore might not be able to bring herself to do anything. "That's okay," he heard her say as he stepped into the elevator car. The door closed, he pushed the down button with the tissue, and dropping it to the floor for someone not cursed with his affliction to pick up, he descended to the main floor comforted a little by the softened tone with which the old woman had just made her last remark.



The incident exhausted what little vigor he had eked out of his sleep the night before. Lately sleep had been coming to him with difficulty. He seemed to be lying on top of sleep rather than in it, and to avoid the anxiousness of waiting for it to come that simply delayed it further, the last few nights he had sat up and read by night-light chapters of a book he had bought after much inspection at a local store. It was about the psychological meaning of geometrical shapes, and he found particular interest in the universal use of the cone as a symbol for goodness and how it turns up in many specific embodiments such as the wizard's hat, the holy mountain, and the horn of the unicorn.

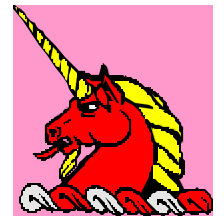


He gave a yawn that was ludicrously incongruous to his hurry and the agitation he was feeling. The digital clock on his dashboard said he had just five minutes to make the nearly twelve-minute drive to his workplace after his lunch hour. That morning he had dashed into the corporate center twenty-one minutes late to find his supervisor standing before the open door of his obviously idle office, the man's arms folded with menacing authority and judgment across his chest because for more than a month Qwerty had been making an addiction of being late. His panic to get back to work on time



this afternoon made him oblivious to the two men from the electric company sitting with open lunch boxes and thermoses on the waist-high brick wall that surrounded the lot where he had parked his car. The car, he thanked God, started at the turn of his key, but just as he was pulling front-first out of the parking space, a terrible uncertainty hit him like a stroke.

Had he turned off the burner of the stove below his old-fashioned coffeepot? In a few seconds he lived through an hour's worth of mental checking and by some miracle, made possible perhaps by the desperation of his tardiness, he located inside of some remote nook of his mind the feeling that he had indeed shut the burner off, and to reinforce that feeling so that he wouldn't forget it later, he braked abruptly. At the same time that his vehicle, a large red Plymouth Fury, shrieked to a halt and several times rocked back and forth violently on its shock absorbers, he made the sign of the unicorn—he let go of the steering wheel, brought up his arms over his head to form a cone-like position ending with his hands palm to palm prayerwise, and as an act of submission to the rightness of the sign he immediately jerked the upper half of his body forward and back in a bizarre version of the bow they make to each other in the Near East. He was quite visible through his windshield and as he looked up in a second of relief, he saw for the first time a few yards directly ahead of him the two workers on the wall, one of them turning for confirmation and support to the other, his mouth ajar in a downturned smile of amazement and disbelief. Suddenly Qwerty's car seemed very small and sitting in it he felt very large and exposed. He jerked the clutch into position, his foot slammed into the accelerator, and with the same shriek with which it had halted, the car turned and shot out into the street, careless of any police that may have been patrolling nearby.



Later Qwerty didn't remember racing through the neighborhoods that led to his workplace. He remembered only that many expletives had seethed out through his clenched teeth, nearly all of them suffixed by a self-flagellating "DAMN FOOL!"