

Bill's Journal

August – September, 1966

Introduction and Summary by Robert Perry

Bill Thetford kept what appears to be a journal of Course application for two months—August and September—in 1966, just shy of a year from when the Course began coming through (in October of 1965).

The value of this journal is that it affords us a glimpse of what it looked like to Bill—and clearly to Helen to a degree as well—to apply the Course in daily life. This is while Helen is still receiving the Course (she was taking down Chapters 11 and 12 in the Text during this time) and also receiving personal messages for the two of them. In fact, she received two such messages during this very time period, both of which address conditions referred to in Bill's journal.

This, of course, was very early on, before the Text was even half-completed and before the Workbook or Manual had come. One might argue that Bill and Helen were too “green” at this point to provide much of an example. Yet the flip side of this is that they were still very enthusiastic about *really* doing what Jesus was telling them, and also that there hadn't been a chance for “Course lore”—common misconceptions about the Course—to grow up and take hold. They were getting the material fresh from Jesus' mouth and were doing their best to actually put it into practice. As such, I think Bill's journal provides an invaluable window onto what it looks like to apply the Course in daily life.

I've supplemented the material with some background information supplied by Ken Wapnick in *Absence from Felicity* (pp. 311-324 in the first edition).

Sunday, Sept. 11.

Weekend review.

Sat. A.M. went to meeting of Int. Parapsych. Assoc. with HS. Content of meeting seemed rather disappointing, but did talk to G.M. [possibly Gardner Murphy, famous psychologist and parapsychologist who was at this organization's conventions in 1959 and 1960] re possible article for J[ournal] [the article for J may be an article containing the content of the meeting for the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, of which Bill was the Associate Editor]. Felt uneasy and strange in this setting, which doesn't seem to bear any real relationship to goals of course [ACIM]. However, an interest in this area might open up more relevant implications as opposed to current mechanistic model in Psychology. H.S. very disturbed about attending session. Had fallen and bruised knees. Considerable indications of environmental distraction, etc. Walked through Park and back to apt. where we talked until about 4. Some improvement in general state after this. Know what H. is trying, but find it difficult not to respond to my perception of fluctuations re goal direction.

General state of mild depression, which lifted considerably during evening. Cal came before 7 and left after 11. During this time I was extremely impressed with how much he has learned by directly applying the course. There have been literally hundreds of episodes in his life where he has had immediate and startling results. Relationship with J. [KW: one of Cal's friends] has changed almost totally from past. As a witness, Cal is convincing in every respect. Went to bed around 12 feeling much more with it than I have been for some time. [KW explains: "Cal [Hatcher] was a hospital administrator with whom Helen and Bill shared the Course right from the beginning."]

Sunday A.M. got up around 7, and tried to devote attention to notes [ACIM] until 1 when H arrived. During this time, I felt extreme importance of mastering material, but still with a peculiar sense of unreality about it at times. The ego is hard to see for what it is.

Was aware when H arrived of her great effort to help me by demonstrating a dramatic shift from Sat. She appeared radiant at times, but with a slight undercurrent of depression and strain. But her effort to be helpful was impressive, and I felt better in some respects. Still, however, an awareness of not being totally committed.

In evening, felt depressed. Conversation with H. in which she again made every effort to be helpful. Aware that it is only my responsibility for what and how I perceive. But still have trouble with this. However, H's motivation, if sustained, must be very encouraging for both of us.

Assignment to keep daily record, and list of incompleting tasks:

List:

Marsha

Sid and Bobette

Society Proj. Techs.

Community Psychiatry planning

Cousin Jean in Ohio

Betty and Jackson?

Book Reviews.

Columbia Grades.

Rose w.

Tues. Sept. 13

Recap. of Monday, the 12th

Great difficulty in getting up, feeling of generalized fatigue, etc. as continuation of previous depression. Found difficulty in changing this mood state, but improved as day continued. Discussed prob. with H., who was obviously having a strong phobic reaction, but was also impressed with her very genuine attempts to look at this problem as it is, and to give up belief in fantasy gratification [KW: "i.e., the various forms of specialness"] as meaningful. Very marked steps toward goals of course. If she could also give up belief in attacking herself as an attempted solution to conflict situations, I know that she would feel immensely better. (Went to Black bldg. ceremony for new term.)

Tried to focus in P.M. on Journal [KW: *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*] papers. Have felt somewhat depressed about getting correspondence out. But did write letters and dispose of about 12 papers in afternoon. This is certain a record for me in handling this type of problem. Then, spent ½ hour at apt. with H. re. attempts to help us get in focus. We went through the usual bit about being too tired, too late, etc., but H. did respond very well to this relatively brief time, and left her feeling we had made real progress.

Spent about 1 hour in phone conversation with B. Neu. [KW: one of Bill's friends] (Should I try to see him this Wed. P.M.?) He is in an extremely difficult situation, but did feel that talking with him helped both of us. If I really believed that there was no order of difficulty, etc., I would feel much more optimistic about Janice's [KW: wife of B. Neu.] being able to change her mind. She is obviously terribly frightened, but is engaging in almost every possible distortion to avoid awareness of this fear. It must be important for me to make a direct contribution here.

Talked with H. twice in P.M. Asked her to call me back after first conversation, which she did. Improvement notable second time. Discouraged obviously self-destructive wish for exercises, etc., which she accepted (but without initial enthusiasm.) We are making progress, but our vacillations are so great that it is sometimes hard to see this clearly.

Also, Chuck called—everything as usual. Should arrange to see them soon. Should I go away this week-end? Bed around 11, and up at 6, feeling much better.

Sept. 15, 66

Notes covering Sept. 13 and 14.

These have been turbulent days, and crucial ones, in terms of course application. In many respects, they have not been different from most of the days in the last few months and year, but as of now I DO feel that we have made some very significant progress. Since we have made it, the worse that could happen would be temporary vacillation and dissociation of what has become COMPELLINGLY real.

Tues. and Wed. afternoons were spent exclusively on attempts to face and understand fear and hostility. H. was in a great panic about this and found EVERYTHING associated with our collaboration fraught with fear and danger. However, the main change has been the very clear-cut recognition expressed by her to me last night via phone that she NO LONGER SAW

ANYTHING FEARFUL ABOUT THE MOST RECENT NOTES. It is apparent to both of us that an explicit statement of a problem, namely our ambivalent attitudes toward each other, can only lead to a constructive resolution of this long-standing conflict. H. saw with great clarity last night that the glow of love entirely dispels fear, and felt quite radiant when she called. She also recognized something else which I regard of great importance, because its obviousness cannot be denied. Namely, that her physical appearance is entirely changed when she is out of conflict and believes only in the reality of love. This has been VERY apparent to everyone who has seen her during the past year. Her OWN recognition of this obvious fact should be very reinforcing for both of us.

As usual, H's predictions re me were quite accurate. I did go home and sleep very soundly before seeing WC. This is the first time that I have napped this week. [KW: "Bill's lack of energy usually necessitated an afternoon nap"] While still somewhat groggy when I awakened, I did feel more with it, and was greatly relieved by the above mentioned conversation (phone). I did not sleep particularly soundly during the night; a vague awareness from time to time that a great deal of unconscious material was being stirred up. Perhaps this deals with the beginning of release of repression.

Other events of importance on the 14th:

During the afternoon, I received a call from Peg [KW: "the usually hostile psychiatrist to whose child development research project Helen and Bill consulted"], the sole purpose of which was to indicate some very positive attitudes about Psych[ology]., based on a medical confirmation of a psychological prediction re a visual problem in a child two years ago. Peg very graciously emphasized that she wanted to indicate her ability to make a call which was not a complaint, but rather a compliment. It should be very striking to both of us that her attitudes have changed completely, as our own perceptions shifted toward reality. A good example that "there is no order of diff."

Also, my attitudes toward D.F. [KW: secretary] and replacement for Naomi [KW: Psychology staff member] are noteworthy. As long as I persisted in denying the truth in DF's mind we were having trouble with this decision. In the course of two conversations with her in the afternoon, there was a marked shift. During the first conversation, I made a real effort not to get angry, but nevertheless was somewhat judgmental and impatient about hiring someone because of personal charm, etc., rather than with an emphasis on typing skills. I strongly urged Dora to call references for the Negro woman applicant (Mrs. Shannon) whom we had seen on Tuesday. Dora then called me back shortly before 4 to indicate the extensively glowing recommendation she had received re this applicant, and that she would have her come in on Monday to meet HH [KW: the department chairman].

Importance of above is that between these two calls, I did try again to look with greater awareness of reality on DF, and that the change reflected in her later attitudes MUST be related to the change in my own perceptions.

WHEN WILL WE STOP DENYING THE FACT THAT THE ABOVE EXAMPLES ARE TYPICAL OF WHAT HAPPENS TO US EVERY TIME WE ARE WILLING TO LOOK FOR TRUTH AND NOT ERROR? It is really quite startling, but I am aware of my real difficulty in keeping this in mind without doubt or equivocation. WHEN I NO LONGER DENY THE REALITY OF MY EXPERIENCE, ALL OF THESE PROBLEMS WITH EVANESCE.

Questions I should ask re week-end, Joe L., Dr. Meyer, Etta and N.Y. Society, Lette's replacement, and Cal (Should I call Jack tonight?)

Sept. 28, '66

Considerable interruption in daily record, partly because most propitious time for doing this (as I see it now) is early in the morning. Have been meeting regularly with CH [Cal Hatcher] from 8-9 each morning since last week. This morning he did not show, which is in accordance with our agreement. Namely, no coercion about this. For my own learning, I think it is advantageous if I am here at 8 regardless of C. However, did experience slight sense of disappointment when he did not arrive. The mutual interaction in trying to learn the material is facilitating for me, but attempt to review notes alone. This is helpful, but not quite as much as when done together, either with H or C.

Yesterday was noteworthy in that both H and I are making more of a concerted effort to look at the problem we are having, and experience more success in doing so. The manifest illogic of our position in vacillating all the time becomes increasingly apparent and, hopefully, increasingly unacceptable. Whenever we vacillate we are denying the reality of our experiences when we are in our RM's. That which always works when we are thinking in accordance with it can hardly be vacillating. Only our own perceptions, decisions, and willingness to learn that there is ONLY ONE THING WE WANT TO LEARN is the problem. Everything else that we impose as learning blocks are quite evidently reactions of fear, resting on the belief that truth and love are destructive. This is ABSURD. While I still have difficulty keeping this in mind consistently, the logic or illogic of the situation, depending on which teacher we choose, is difficult to miss.

Was pleased that H and I have a presentation which I believe was quite successful yesterday with the Neuro [KW: Neurological Institute] residents. We were both anxious about this, despite the fact that H. had very carefully prepared the appropriate illustrative material for this occasion. I felt that it was somehow necessary on this occasion to demonstrate that we did not need the tight structure which is frequently thought essential in ANY presentation. Although I experienced considerable anticipatory anxiety, I tried to keep in mind that the one who sent me would tell me what to do and what to say. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY EXPERIENCE WITH THIS KIND OF PROFESSIONAL TALK, I decided that it was not necessary to have notes, or an outline, and that I would simply to follow what it says. From the standpoint of conviction, this should be very compelling to me, because I spoke for 20 or 25 minutes without any difficulty, and I believe with reasonable coherence, covering the essential orientation points which were necessary. It would probably be very difficult for me to reconstruct what I actually said, but I could gauge from audience reaction that it seemed in the right direction.

When I turned the session over to H. at a time which seemed appropriate, she also presented the material very clearly and very well. If we could get it through our heads that everything can be handled easily, in a similar way, this should be enormously relieving and convincing for both of us.

I feel very encouraged that we are making considerable progress now, and much more than either one of us recognizes. H. is beginning to see that there are really only two emotions, love and fear. This is perfectly apparent to me as I see her every day. When she is trying to deny love, she does become afraid and anticipates disaster. The current cold episode is highly illustrative of this. Yet, the opposite of this has been amply demonstrated many times, and she IS

at peace, happy, radiant and free from fear WHEN SHE RECOGNIZES THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE THING WHICH IS REAL, AND ONLY ONE THING WHICH SHE WANTS.

As we continue to see this clearly and with conviction, we should have no problems with the course, which is very explicit on this point.

SUMMARY OF ELEMENTS OF LIVING THE COURSE FOUND IN BILL'S JOURNAL

Reading

Reading the Course, paying attention to its specific words, quoting the Course, wanting to master the material

Meditation

Meditating as a regular practice, meditating at the same time each day, meditating with another, recommending meditation to another

Asking

Asking for guidance, asking with another, asking about inner things (e.g., understanding of why an upset arose), asking about outer things (e.g., when to call someone who needs help), retaining past guidance in memory, linking present guidance to past guidance, turning to guidance for help in what to say (e.g., in a presentation)

Mind-watching

Watching the mind for ego reactions, being aware they are inappropriate and unhelpful, realizing negative feelings are a sign of ego, recognizing a contrast between conscious desire and unconscious resistance, being aware of being divided between two thought systems, being honest about one's ego, trying to see it for what it is, trying to look at and explicitly state the problem, being aware of one's own responsibility for how one perceives

Reminding oneself of truth

Repeating first-person statements from the Course (e.g., the truly helpful prayer), reminding oneself about the true reality of others, reminding oneself that only love works and is desirable, reminding oneself of key Course principles (e.g., the first principle of miracles)

Being truly helpful

Giving love to others, especially in the form of helping them see their problems differently—treating this as a serious responsibility, joining with another in this, doing it in spite of ambivalence, making a list of those who need one's help, making sure one takes *action* on the list, noting any miracle impulses that arise, asking about when to act on those impulses, prioritizing being helpful over bodily needs, playing a kind of teacher role in recommending spiritual practices—all in the hopes that giving love to others will lead to positive changes in them and to a sense of rest and peace within oneself

Joining

Joining with another in doing the Course—joining in asking for guidance, in meditation, in being truly helpful, in trying to heal the relationship in which this joining occurs

Being results-oriented

Having a results-oriented frame of mind—noting the negative results of giving in to the ego vs. the positive results of applying the Course, noting when Course principles have been demonstrated in action, noting when one’s inner guidance has been confirmed, noting the outer radiance that comes from being “with it” within, celebrating the miraculous effects of love on others, expecting a change of mind to heal relationships and situations, seeing all this as invaluable confirmation that only truth is desirable and true

Being goal-oriented

Seeing progress toward the goal of the Course as the single priority, noting that “slippage” or vacillation has occurred, being aware of not being totally committed, recognizing the importance of sustained motivation, noting the signs that progress has occurred, celebrating when clear progress has been made

THE BIG PICTURE

1. Trying to see things differently

Through reading, meditating, repeating Course statements, reminding oneself of truth, mind-watching, etc.

2. Helping others to see things differently

Helping others with their needs, problems, and concerns, particularly by helping them to have a brighter, saner outlook on those things.

3. Joining with another person in 1 and 2