

Summer 2005
 Issue No. 9
 (Number 9)
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"Lies! Lies! All of It, Lies!"
**JHS Class of 1972 Thirderly
 On-Line Newsletter**

Welcome to this, the ninth newsletter of the Jericho High School class of 1972.

Official Propaganda Tool of Jericho High School's Class of '72

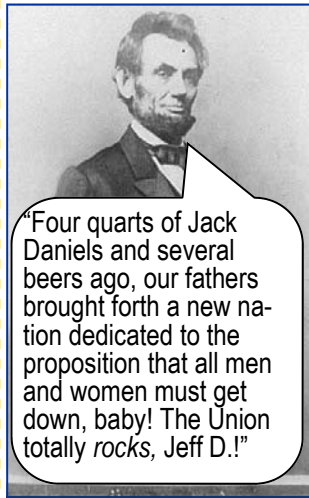
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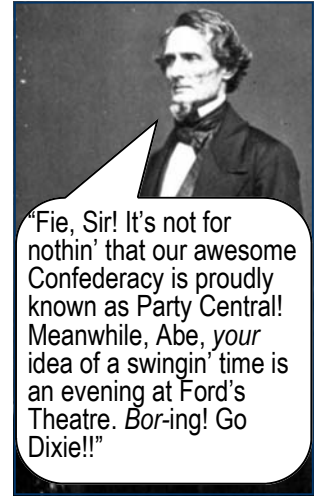
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Thanks to this issue's correspondents. We hope that you will contribute news about you and yours to future issues. Best wishes to the JHS class of 1972.

You can find all issues of the class newsletter on our Web site, at <http://www.jhs1972.net>.



Get Ready to Vote!
 ~
Our 35th Reunion in Fall 2007
 ~
In Jericho North? Or Jericho South?



WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING THIS

Fourth of July? Probably your usual routine of getting sloppy drunk, then dashing around the neighborhood after dark with nothing on but your "Kiss the Chef" apron and ducking repeatedly behind the thorn bushes to avoid the local constable, who after twelve years of this annual ritual is growing increasingly irritated.

How about a change of pace for 2005? Come Independence Day, you'll receive via e-mail your ballot for where we'll hold the JHS class of 1972's 35th reunion in the fall of 2007, along with all the information you'll need to render an informed decision for a change. You'll have two months — until Labor Day — to cast your vote.

Best of all, you'll be able to participate in the democratic process without setting foot inside a voting booth, which, as you've explained several times now,

you don't care to visit because "the curtains are so shabby." Whatever you say.

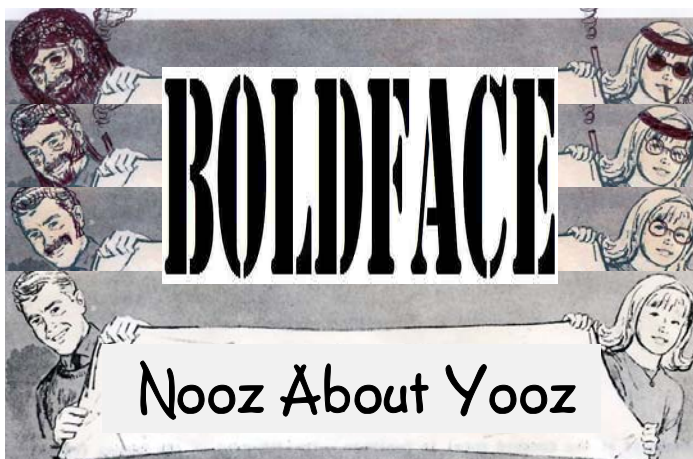
You get to decide whether we throw our next party north or south of the Mason-Dixon line: either (A) at the Milleridge Inn, in Jericho, Long Island, or (B) at a catering hall in the Fort Lauderdale, Florida, area, also known as "Jericho South" on account of the not-insignificant number of families that have moved there.

A few preliminary details:

- If the class decides to have the party at the Milleridge, the date would be Saturday, September 29, 2007, from 1 PM to 6 PM. It would still be warm enough that we could do something after the main event (hitting the beach last time was a blast). The previous two weekends are out because of the Jewish holidays, preceded by Labor Day. Also, airfares are cheap then too.

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You'll Have From July 4 Until Labor Day to Vote on Where to Hold Our 35th Reunion!



“Gowdy Ah-moose Eejitoor ...”: Graduations

Kathy Milner Hartwig graduated in May from Fort Wayne, Indiana’s Taylor University with an associate’s degree in early childhood education.

Kathy, a mother of two, plans to teach at a Christian organization called Youth for Christ. As a senior at Jericho High, Kathy attended the New York Institute of Technology. Then she went to Nassau Community College. She’s lived in Fort Wayne for twelve years. Congratulations, Kathy!

Do the clean-cut young folks above look familiar? They should. Their images graced the Jericho School News newsletter that was mailed to your parents to let them know just what it was you were supposedly doing on weekdays between 8 AM and 3 PM.



Kathy at our 30th reunion

JHS Numero Uno in New York State Again

Once again **Jericho High School** placed number one in New York State — and fourteenth in the United States — in *Newsweek* magazine’s annual ranking of best U.S. high schools. Other Long Island schools to make the Hot 100 were: Cold Spring Harbor (#16), Great Neck South (#22), Manhasset (#30), Great Neck North (#43), Rockville Centre’s South Side High (#45), Port Jefferson’s Vandermeulen (#64), Miller Place (#73), and Wheatley in Old Westbury (#85). The number-one high school in America? Jefferson County in Irondale, Alabama, of all places.



A Jericho Junkie

I just spent the last few days of my mini-vacation in Arizona reading everything our Web site and everyone’s bio. I had lunch in Scottsdale with Larry Licht and his lovely family and just had the best time.

You know, ever since last summer, I have become a “Jericho Junkie.” It is not that I want to relive my childhood, but after getting together for the communal 50th birthday party and the newsletters, it makes me happy and proud to know that we really did have such a normal life and that most of us turned out pretty great.

I wanted to say thanks for all you do here. Otherwise I would not remember half my Jericho High experiences.

Cathy Kibel Shriger
Los Angeles, CA
cadander@sbcglobal.net

THE CLASS OF ‘72 ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Be sure to visit and bookmark our official class Web site at <http://www.jhs1972.net!>

- ♦ Contact info for 300 of us
- ♦ Updated “yearbook”
- ♦ 200-plus photos from our communal 50th birthday party and 30-year reunion
- ♦ Updates on upcoming reunion activities
- ♦ All issues of newsletter
- ♦ All issues of the *Jer-Echo* from your senior year
- ♦ Elementary-school class photos
- ♦ Lots more stuff ‘n things ‘n junk!



Two Class of '72 Siblings Inducted Into Hall of Fame

FOR THE NINTH YEAR IN A row, the Jericho High School class of 1972 was shut out of the JHS Hall of Fame. We're almost starting to get a Phil Rizzuto complex. But we're confident that, like the Scooter, our day will come.

Until then, we'll keep polishing that boffo acceptance speech ("As I look out upon this sea of shining faces, I am reminded of the inspiring words of ...") and take solace in the fact that **Ilise Zimmerman's** younger brother, **Richard** (from the class of 1976), and **Kathy Milner Hartwig's** older brother, **Michael** (1969), were among the five alumni honored at the fifteenth annual induction ceremony, held at the Jericho Public Library on April 7, 2005.

This brings the total number of inductees to seventy-nine. If Michael Bloomberg were mayor of Jericho, he'd be angling for a new multipurpose stadium in Merry Lane Park to house all of the plaques.

History was made as Richard and Ilise become only the second set of siblings elected to the hall (Ilise in 1996), following in the footsteps of **John Innelli** (1973) and his younger sister, **Michele Innelli Cox** (1976).

Mr. Robert Hoffman is the director of the Hall of Fame Committee, which includes **Ms. Barbara Murphy**.

Richard Zimmerman, MD

Dr. Richard Zimmerman is the head of neurologic surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Arizona, where he lives with his wife, Faith, and their ten-year-old daughter, Natalie.

Richard, who is also an associate professor of neurological surgery at the Mayo College of Medicine, attended Boston University Medical School. He served his residency at the Medical College of Virginia, in Richmond, then moved to Arizona. Before coming to the Mayo Clinic, he was a fellow in neurovascular surgery at St. Joseph's Hospital in Phoenix.

To Ilise, it's no surprise that her brother became a doctor. "I always thought



he'd go on to a career in the sciences," she says. "He was a natural in physics. He used to take apart our radios and TVs and put them back together. He was always fascinated by reptiles, including Speedy the Iguana, who lived in my room.

"Richard excelled in school," she continues. "He used to get A's in every subject and X's in behavior/attitude, because he was very independent. He also could thrive with very little sleep, which was an attribute that came in handy in medical school and residency training!"

Michael Milner

Retired New York City firefighter Mike Milner is one of the heroes of September 11, 2001. His company, Rescue 4 of Queens, lost seven men that day. Just hours after the World

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Michael Milner (second from right) with some of his fellow firemen from the FDNY's Rescue 4.

These Inductees Have No Relationship Whatsoever to the Class of '72, But We'll Acknowledge Their Impressive Achievements Anyway, Because That's the Way Our Parents Raised Us:

Howard Lutnick (1979) is the chief executive officer of



Cantor Fitzgerald, the brokerage firm that lost 658 employees in the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Had Howard not been late to work in Tower One because he'd taken his five-year-old son to kindergarten that morning, he almost certainly would have been among the victims, which included his brother and his best friend.

Lutnick drew unfair criticism when he had to stop paying the salaries of those who died, in order for Cantor Fitzgerald to continue. However, he pledged to donate to the victims' families 25 percent of the company's profits for five years, plus ten years of health care coverage.

Miraculously, he got Cantor Fitzgerald back on its feet immediately — posting a profit in the very next quarter — and to date has raised well over \$90

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History of Jericho, Part II of X V O T G J J J

True Story! The Birth of the Jericho Jayhawk

By Silo Pegbottom
Official Jericho Historian

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHO NOT ONLY designed Jericho High's beaky, bird-brained mascot but also chose the school's blue-and-gold colors. It was Ilene Pincus's older sister, Gayle, a member of JHS's first homegrown graduating class, in 1961.

"The last time I looked," says Ilene, "my sister's name was still printed in the corner of the Jericho jayhawk book covers sold at the school bookstore."

According to Gayle, who today lives in retirement in Italy and uses the name Gay Pompeii, the class before hers attended high school in Carle Place while Jericho's building was still under construction. She'd actually wanted to go to Carle Place, she says, because it was a "real" high school compared to Jericho, whose 1961 senior class consisted of just thirty-five boys and thirty-six girls. There was no football team until her sophomore or junior year, she recalls, and the food in the cafeteria was "terrible."

Gay doesn't remember who asked her to design the school mascot and select the colors, but since she was a talented artist, she assumes it was probably one of the art teachers. Before retiring, Gay was president of a sweater manufacturer.



Gay Pompeii and (inset) sis Ilene Sue Pincus



Eternal thanks to Gayle Pincus for designing the Jericho Jayhawk and picking the school colors. Below, check out some of these rejected submissions (with original judging-committee comments) from other class of '61 students. Hoo boy ...



A tad murky, no? Needs to pop more.



"The ol' beige and oyster"?! Doesn't work for me at all ...



Good choice of colors, but suggest using modern English!!!!

"The Jericho ???????"



I realize the kids are still wild about ELVIS, but no, absolutely not!

"The Jericho Jackass"



Good alliteration, but "Jericho Jackass"?! Over my dead body!

"The Jericho Paramecium"



Let a science nerd design your school mascot, and this is what you get ...

First Person Singular

My Son, My Hero: Raising A Child With Autism

By Philip Bashe

I've been putting off writing this for, oh, about a year now. Since I'm an author professionally, maybe it's seemed too much like work. Plus, the subject is extremely personal and important to me, so I want to get it *just right*, and that's been intimidating — a strange feeling for someone who's written seventeen books.

So I've decided to sit down and just spew out our story (now *there's* a lovely image), and however it turns out is how it turns out. It'll probably be pretty disjointed and hop all over the place, because Asperger's syndrome is a complex disorder and difficult to explain, but if I break it up with subheads, you'll barely notice.

Be forewarned: My last four books have each clocked in at over 250,000 words, so being concise isn't my strong suit. Also, I found it too hard to whittle all the pictures we have of Justin down to just a few, so I decided to go with a whole bunch. It's one of the perks of doing this here newsletter, along with the free limo and complimentary string cheese.

Wait — the parade of excuses marches on. I can't promise that this article is going to be 100 percent accurate scientifically. Again, if I have to research and fact-check it, it'll be too much like my real job. It's meant to be more personal and impressionistic than a formal piece profiling Asperger's syndrome.

Finally, if listening to a father babble on about how great his kid is bores you to tears, you'll probably want to skip ahead to the "Win a Dream Date With Tom DeLay" contest on page 17. Sorry, but I can't help it. My son is my personal hero because nothing — and I do mean nothing — has ever come easy for him, and I am so, so proud of him.

What Is Asperger's Syndrome?

What is Asperger's syndrome? [Looking up]
Sorry, didn't realize one of those subhead things

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The face of autism? Middle row: Here's Justin at 4 months and (bottom) 1 1/2 years. At right, top to bottom: Justin at age 2 1/4, 11 months, 1 1/2 years, and with dad Phil and mom Patty on his second birthday. He's always been a pretty happy little guy, with a great sense of humor.



My Son, My Hero

Continued from page 5

had already asked the rhetorical question.

Let me tell you a bit about AS and Justin's various learning disabilities, so that you can appreciate how far he's come, especially in the last two years.

When Justin was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome at age five in 1997, it was an obscure disorder. Few pediatricians or even pediatric neurologists or psychiatrists had heard of it. Although AS was first written about in 1944 by Austrian physician Hans Asperger, it did not become an "official" diagnosis in the United States until 1994, with its inclusion in the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* published by the American Psychiatric Association.

Asperger's syndrome, an autistic spectrum disorder, is a neurobiological/developmental disability present at birth, although the effects typically don't announce themselves for months or, in Justin's case, years. That it's a spectrum disorder tells you that the condition behaves differently from one person to the next.

Kids who are considered classically autistic – at the more extreme end of the spectrum – often are severely speech delayed. Some never really develop a vocabulary. They have difficulty relating to and interacting with the world around them. Many meet the criteria for mental retardation.

Asperger's syndrome at the opposite end of the spectrum. You may hear it referred to as high-functioning autism. But, again, what having AS means for Justin may not describe how it manifests in one of his seventh-grade classmates at Lawrence Middle School, which is one of the few schools on Long Island to have

developed a program specifically for kids with Asperger's.

Children with AS often have above-average IQs, like Justin. Some are brilliant, at least in specific areas. They may crawl, walk, talk, and toilet train on schedule, as Justin did. For these kids, it's predominately a social disability. But it's neurological, an anomaly of the brain, not behavioral. Researchers at Yale have conducted functional MRI scans on kids with AS. They've found that some functions normally routed to the emotional center of the brain may wind up instead in the portion that most of us rely on for logic.

So a child with Asperger's – again, not *all* children with AS – may seem emotionally disconnected, or tend to see the world in black and white. And when you view anything in black and white, and miss the shadings that color most interactions in life, you're prone to misinterpreting people's motives or words.

You may be somewhat rigid and have difficulty with transitions, like when changing classes at school. Things can seem overwhelming, as if your senses are in overdrive. Sounds are too loud, motion is too fast, making eye contact too intense, and so on.

From the time Justin was around two, we began to notice that loud, high-pitched sounds – like at a children's birthday party – would send him into a panic. Not all the time, but enough that it became a concern. The problem worsened as he hit age five and expanded to include anyplace that tended to be loud and cavernous, like a shopping mall or, in particular, the Hall of Science Museum in Queens.

We're fortunate that Justin has always been extremely verbal and expressive, and able to tell us how he feels. When he was three,

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Top to bottom: Justin, 4, with the World's Best Nana and Grandpa, and with his dad after graduating from pre-pre-K; at his 6th birthday party; and at karate for special-needs kids when he was almost 7.



My Son, My Hero

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Justin (in hat), then eight, with the world's coolest cousin, Doug, who's two years older and lives in Florida.

he would sometimes clap his hands to his ears and complain, "The sound hurts my ears!" And it did. It was literally painful. He usually preferred talking to adults or older kids, because their voices were deeper and thus more soothing than children his own age. I remember reading about a little girl with AS who used to scream every time someone turned on the kitchen sink. When she was older, she explained that to her it sounded like the rumbling of a giant underground pipe about to burst.

Naturally, this can be limiting. Justin wasn't able to sit through a movie until he was eight.

Or we'd be at a playground, and he'd suddenly exclaim, "That leaf blower is too loud!" I'd think, *What leaf blower?* Then I'd listen *really carefully*, and, sure enough, away in the distance I could faintly make out the buzzing noise.

A Little Bit of Dys and Dat

Asperger's is a syndrome — that is, a constellation of related disorders. *Comorbidities*, they're called. Lovely word. Today, at thirteen, Justin's autism actually isn't too much of a problem, thanks to a combination of various therapies, medication, and, of course, tons of love. But he has a number of learning disabilities. Most kids with AS have one or two. The J-Mon hit the jackpot.

In addition to what we used to call his "super-duper hearing," our son has central auditory processing disorder. This has become less of a problem, through therapy and, probably, maturity. But beginning at a young age, he would frequently seem not to hear what was said to him. Not if you were alone with him one on one, or if he was in a quiet environment, but in a room full of people or anyplace where there was background noise. Yet in his annual hearing exams (you know, listening to a

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"... AND NOW, FOR THE YOUNGSTERS ..."

What are some class of 1972 progeny up to? Find out right here ... on our page ...



Stephen Spiers and Patty Ryon Spiers

Busy times in the Spiers household in Palm Harbor, Florida. Patty reports: "Number two son, **Brad**, graduated from the University of South Florida in May. He will go on to play amateur golf this summer, then hopes to turn pro after that. Number three son, **C. J.**, graduated from high school and has a full scholarship to play basketball (he's six-foot-eight) at Eckerd College, a private school in St. Petersburg, Florida. Number one son, **Rob**, gets married on June 19. Meanwhile, Steve's daughter **Dali** had a baby girl on April 4!"

Marci Glickman Ross

David Ross, son of Marci Glickman Ross, of Long Beach, Long Island, will be attending the University of Buffalo beginning this fall.



Marci and husband Leonard Ross at our thirtieth reunion

TOONS CARTOONS SCARTO OTOONS SCARTOONS SCART



By Dan Clurman

About Dan:

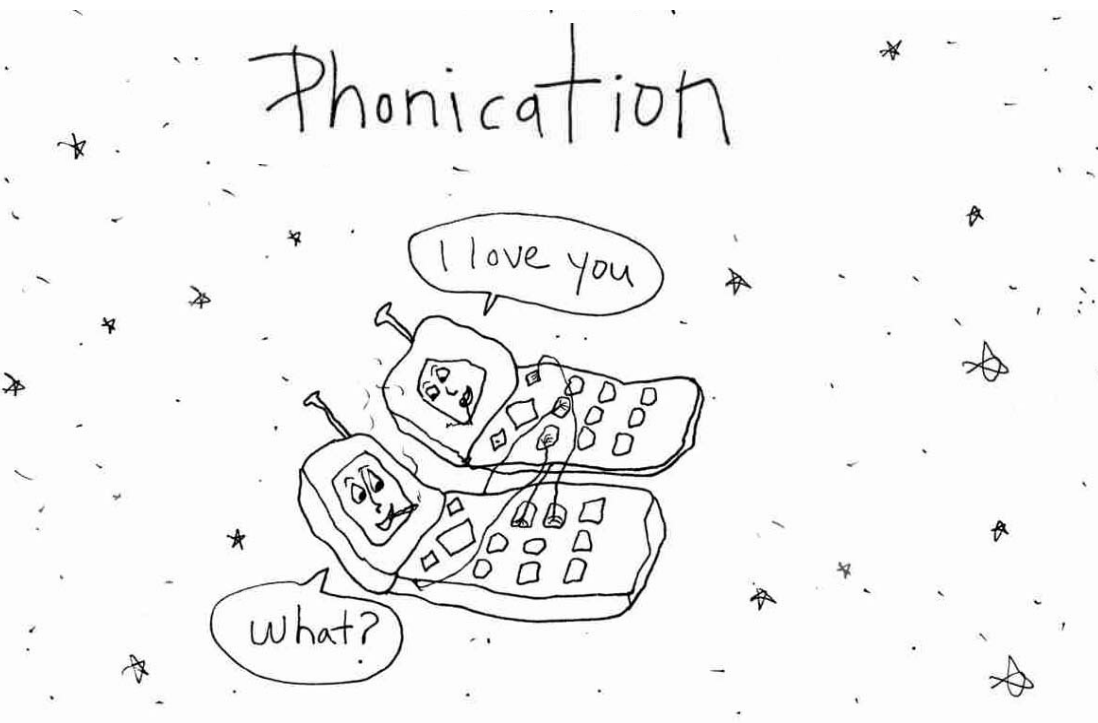
"I have been a coach and educator for the last twenty years, delivering training and classes in non-profits, universities, and corporations.



"I assist professionals, business people, couples, and students to more skillfully navigate life transitions, as well as improve their communication and presentations. I also have a small practice as a Feldenkrais® practitioner, a movement-based form of education.

"I've cowritten a few books, *Money Disagreements: How to Talk About Them* and *Conversations With Critical Thinkers*, as well as a book of poems and drawings, *Floating Upstream*. The book these toons are part of will be published in a few months."

To purchase *Floating Upstream*, send \$15 (plus \$2 postage) to Dan Clurman, 396 61st Street, Oakland, CA 94618. For *Money Disagreements*, send \$10 to the same address.





March—April 1972

Senior Year Trip to Italy

"Arevideci, sanity!"

"Susan? Susan? Has anyone seen Susan?"

"Call the American Embassy immediately!"



Jason Starr: "I remember traveling around on a bus from city to city with a seemingly endless loop of the Beatles song 'Across the Universe' serenading us on the sound system.

"One day Susan Pollack from the class of '73 (a romance between she and I developed on that trip and lasted a couple of teenage years!) had a laughing fit on the bus. Mr. Vigilante comes to me with an angry face and asks, 'Okay, Jason, what is she on?' He was really upset. The fact is, she wasn't on anything; just being herself. Mr. Vigilante didn't believe me.

"Susan got pissed at Mr. Vigilante when I told her about it. A proper feminist reaction: 'What was he doing talking to you about it? Why didn't he ask me?! Male chauvinist!' Actually, we both loved Mr. Vigilante, and I think everyone on the trip had a blast."

DURING SPRING BREAK, IN LATE MARCH AND early April 1972, twenty-one Jericho High School students traveled to Italy, under the watchful eyes of two favorite teachers, Mr. Charles Vigilante and Ms. Janet Cortez. Here are some photos from that trip, courtesy of Susan Friedland Cristina and Debbi Nathel Kazan, plus commentary from Susan and fellow travelers Linda Caputo Friedmann and Jason Starr. Their fifteen-day itinerary took them to Milan, Verona, Venice, Florence, Assisi, Rome, Pisa, and Genoa.



She did it! She did it! Ilise Zimmerman at the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which, in a mysterious coincidence, had been standing perfectly straight just minutes before this picture was taken ...



➡ [Read Susan Friedland's account of the Italy trip in the June 9, 1972, issue of the Jer-Echo.](#) ⬅

Trip to Italy
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Joyce Barry, Cindy Rosenthal, Ilise Zimmerman, and Beth Flanders pose outside the Galleria in Milan.

Debra Traikos and Debbi Nathel window shopping at Mid-Island Plaza. No, wait – that’s Rome’s Trevi Fountain. Sorry! No Denny’s Depot there.



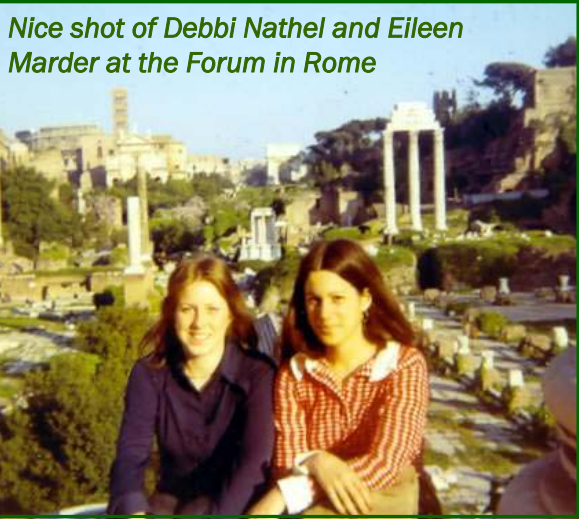
“Hey, rich, beautiful, corn-fed American girls! Look at our tight I-talian trousers! We desperately want Green card – er, to become involved in serious long-term relationship!”



Last night in Genoa: left to right are Ellen Lowenstein, Beth Stewart, Debra Traikos, Nancy Fuchs, Susan Weissman, and Joyce Barry in front with what appears to be one of those chocolate candy cigarettes.



Susan Friedland Cristina: “Most of us girls took random photos of *i raggizzi* (Italian teenage boys).” This shot was taken at the Colosseum in Rome. As Susan noted in her *Jer-Echo* article: “Every guy stops and stares and tries to talk to you.” Dunno, doesn’t sound much different than walking down the hallways of Jericho High to us.



Nice shot of Debbi Nathel and Eileen Marder at the Forum in Rome

Trip to Italy

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Ellen Lowenstein, Cindy Rosenthal, Ms. Janet Cortes on the plane ride home



Linda Caputo Friedmann:

“Susan Friedland took a water taxi by herself from Piazza San Marco, and Mr. Vigilante almost had a stroke until we found her!”

Susan Friedland Cristina:

“Thank God Mr. Vigilante was fluent in Italian! I remember asking a waiter, ‘Is this pork?’ (using high-school Spanish), but I actually called him a pig! Mr. Vigilante to the rescue!”

Thanks to Linda Caputo Friedmann, Jason Starr, and Denise Straus Loverro ('73) for help in I.D.'ing faces. Our apologies to those we missed.

In Genoa. Standing are Loren Krause ('73), Gary Wolf ('73), Jon Greenberg, Beth Stewart ('73), Mr. Vigilante, Nancy Fuchs ('73), Linda Caputo, Jason Starr, Susan Pollack ('73), Susan Silverman, Elise Goldstein, Cindy Rosenthal, Ms. Janet Cortez, unidentified. Sitting: unidentified, Lisa Stewart ('73), Ellen Lowenstein ('73), Debra Traikos, Joyce Barry, Sue Weissman ('73).



PHOTO, КОМРАДЕ?

Are any members of proletariat willing to share with fellow workers photos from senior-year class trip to Mother Russia? If so, please contact thought police at philipbashe@earthlink.net. In appreciation, Kremlin will purge your secret file and provide extra roll of toilet paper for harsh Russian winter!



My Son, My Hero

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series of tones through headphones), he'd test perfectly normal.

One of his wonderful occupational therapists suggested that we try something called auditory integration training, or AIT. Several of her AS patients also had hypersensitive hearing and had been helped by it. Now, there's no reliable scientific evidence regarding its effectiveness or even how it works. But since relatively few people have this condition, it's unlikely that AIT will ever be subjected to a rigorous randomized clinical trial. Sometimes the best information you have is anecdotal. So long as you interpret it accordingly, it can still be useful. Two kids we knew with the identical problem had been helped, while for another AIT did nothing at all. Yet another parent said she saw a slight benefit.

Goddamn Jimmy Buffet

This is an overly simplistic explanation, but, basically, in AIT the patient sits listening to music through headphones. The sound is fed through a machine that supposedly manipulates the frequencies and “jump starts” (I told you this was simplistic) the part of the brain that's in charge of assigning background noise to the background. Few kids would sit still for half an hour — twenty sessions in all, twice a day for ten days — if forced to listen to mere tones. But Justin, a huge fan of the Beatles, the Who, and Blink 182, really enjoyed auditory integration training. I figured that even if it didn't work, the only bad thing that would come out of it (besides the exorbitant cost, which, like most of his therapies, is not covered by insurance), would be his newfound affection for Jimmy Buffet.

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A Tribute to Stuart Roney, My Brother

By Gary Roney

Stuart Roney, Gary's older brother, passed away on May 9, 2005, at the age of fifty-one. Gary writes: Stuie first was diagnosed with a brain tumor when he was ten and I was nine. The tumor was on the pituitary gland, which had to be removed. In those days, brain surgery wasn't what it is today. He never was able to attend public school again.

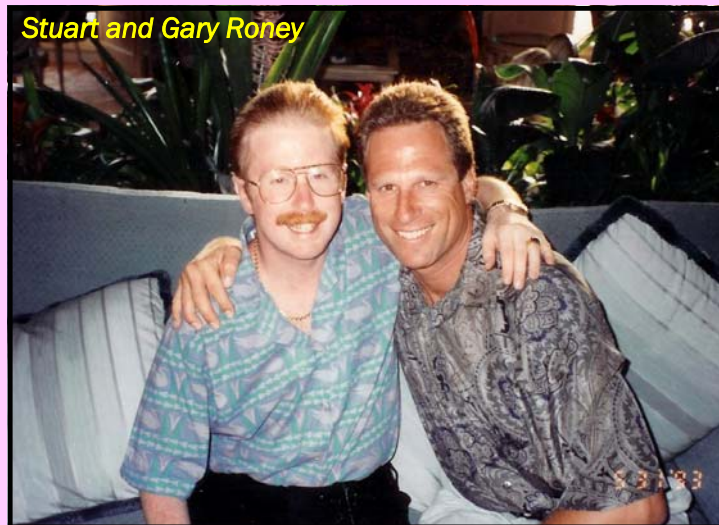
He did really well for quite a long time until he fell into a coma about eight years ago. Because of the coma, he was never able to gain full use of his legs and struggled to walk since that time. He still managed — with the help of my parents — to live a good life. About two months ago he began to have seizures, and the doctors had a hard time regulating his medication.

He made it home after eight weeks in the hospital, and on May 9 his body just couldn't take it any more. He died in his sleep that morning, and we laid him to rest on May 10. I would personally like to thank all of our friends who sent beautiful notes to my parents.

Stuie was a wonderful person; probably the kindest and sweetest person I've ever known. To my brother Howie and I, Stuie was a gift, a brother that we loved more than anyone else in the world. We think about him everyday and will continue to do so until it is our time to say goodbye. I hope that at one time or another Stuie crossed your path. If he did, you would understand where I am coming from. The Jericho High School class of '72 was always so good to him. I thank each and everyone of you for that.

Love always,
Gary

In tribute to his brother, Gary wrote the following eulogy, which he read at Stuart's funeral.



STUART RONEY, ALIAS "BIG STU," "Stu Magoo," "Stuie Louie," "Stupot," "Red."

He was born on August 23, 1953. The first of the three Roney boys and the only one with bright red hair. From his first moments on earth, he had a sparkle in his eyes and a huge smile on his face.

Unfortunately, at an early age Stu was thrown the first of many bad hands. Left at a tremendous disadvantage, he never questioned why, never felt sorry for himself, or wanted anyone's pity. Instead he plowed forward with great determination and inner strength; always looking for the good in everything and everyone, and never dwelling on the bad.

He owed much of his great attitude to our parents and how important they always made him feel. Our mom and dad, Barbara and Irving, have devoted their entire lives to Stuie's care and well being. He al-

ways came first, and none of us ever resented them for it.

They instilled in our family the love, devotion, and utter selflessness a parent has for their child, and taught us the value of always putting your family first. If not for their love, strength, and determination, Stu would never have had the will to survive and push through all the hardships he endured over the last forty years.

And yet Stuie was the glue that held this family together. His good nature, patience, and appreciation for anything anyone ever did for him taught us all what it meant to truly care for one another. He forced us all to keep the ups and downs of everyday life in perspective.

Stuie had a heart of gold. Whenever you asked him how he was doing, he'd reply, "Okay, not bad, pretty good ..." He'd then go on

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My Brother, Stu Roney

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to ask you about yourself, your entire family, and every friend of yours he had ever met.

He was the king of *Jeopardy* and *Wheel of Fortune* and loved a good game of cards. It wasn't easy to get Stu angry, unless of course he lost at black jack in Atlantic City. And beating Dad and Uncle Sy at a game of gin just made his day!

Stu loved all of his family, especially each and every one of his nieces. He had the patience of a saint, and could read and play games with them for hours and hours. Sometimes it was hard to tell which of them were giggling the loudest. He also loved to dance and could "get down and boogie" with the best of us!

Of course we all knew about Stu's collections. He collected everything humanly possible and appreciated any contribution any of us could make to his collection. A quarter, a matchbook, or even a lottery scratch-off card made him beam from ear to ear.

Stu could pick a lobster dry, and appreciated every morsel of it. Yes, he really did know how to enjoy the smallest things in life. You see, one of the best things about Stuie was that he was always happy. No matter how limited his life had become in later years, he was without a doubt the most upbeat, happiest guy you'd ever know.

Though Stu's life was cut short, I know we were all touched by him and his goodness. May his strength, kindness, and determination to survive be an inspiration to all of us.

I know that we are all better people for having had him in our lives. ■

My Son, My Hero

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Check this out: The AIT therapist, an audiologist and speech-language pathologist, first gave Justin a test in which he listened to instructions over a pair of headphones. He had a picture book in his lap, and a voice would instruct him, "Point to the fish." "Now point to the picture of the building." Etcetera. Justin got a 96%.



Justin (blue shirt) in special-ed class at Baldwin's Meadow Elementary School when he was 9.

Then she filtered in voices in the background, like what you would hear if you were sitting in a classroom. This time Justin scored 0%. That helped to explain why he was having trouble learning in kindergarten and why he seemed anxious much of the time in school. The sounds around him, like a chair squeaking or feet kicking desks, were drowning out the teacher's voice.

The AIT treatments helped from day one. After his very first session, I was driving Justin to school. He sat in the back of the car with his head cocked. "You know," he remarked, "things sound *gentler* to me now." Soon afterward, with the aid of some custom-molded earplugs, he was able to go to the movies. These days we even play laser tag at a kids' place called Fun Zone, where they blast Green Day at Boeing 767 volume, and he's okay with it. He had two AIT

"tune ups" at ages seven and nine, and hasn't needed it again.

It's funny: For the past seven years, Justin has played baseball in a program for special-needs kids, called the Baldwin Challenger League. It's fantastic. There are autistic children on his team, two with Downs' syndrome, another in a motorized wheelchair (who gives new meaning to the baseball expression "motoring around the bases"), and so on. They all have a great time, as do the parents. The second Saturday in June, I took Justin to the annual tournament, in which Challenger League teams throughout Nassau County play ball, then have a huge cookout. I counted at least a dozen children walking around with pained expressions and their fingers plugged in their ears. It was a reminder of Justin before we discovered auditory integration training.

Justin's Lesdylia

Some kids with Asperger's have *hyperlexia*, reading (though not necessarily comprehending what they're reading) at an extremely early age. Justin, on the other hand, has such profound dyslexia that two years ago, when he was eleven, he could read only at a first-grade level. This, despite his school trying just about every reading program under the sun for dyslexia.

When he was in third grade at the Baldwin Meadow School, a well-meaning special-ed speech teacher told my wife, Patty, that Justin might never read. She wasn't being overly defeatist or alarmist, it's just that nothing seemed to be working. Two years ago we were considering the Lindamood-Bell reading program for him when all of a sudden everything seemed to kick in, using a program called Edmark. Incredibly, he now is

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My Son, My Hero

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just about up to grade level. He does n't confuse *bs* with *ds* and *2s* with *5s* as much anymore. Yet he'll still have to ask me, "Which is my right hand and which is my left?"

Fortunately, despite Justin's frustrations with learning to read, he's always loved learning. This is one kid who is never, ever bored. Even when he could barely read a word, he would sit down with one of his books, usually something about science or machinery, and study the pictures. Naturally we read to him all the time.

Now that he can do it on his own, it's so cool to see him reading intently. Sometimes he'll get stuck on a word and need our help. But Justin's finally overcoming his many obstacles to reading has helped him become a lot more independent. Just in time for adolescence, too.

Another Asperger's trait is poor theory of mind, or an inability to gen-

ize. It's one of several reasons that people with AS often have difficulty socializing. How to explain this? Let me give an example or two.

Theory of mind enables us to appreciate that other people don't necessarily feel and think the same way that we do. A person with AS may launch uninvited into a lengthy monologue about, say, steam locomotives of the 1800s, because he assumes that everyone else in the group shares his interest.

As for the lack of generalization, here's an illustration: When you were little, you quickly learned to walk carefully on a patch of ice, maybe because you once slipped and fell. But someone without theory of mind doesn't necessarily apply the lesson learned from one situation to the next. So when confronted by a *different* patch of ice, it's as though he's never seen it before.

What can be tragic about people with AS is that most of them are painfully aware of their social awk-

wardness. Justin's always been eager to make friends, but I remember him saying to me wistfully after kindergarten orientation day, "Dad, I *want* to talk to the other kids, I just don't always know what to say. It's hard for me."

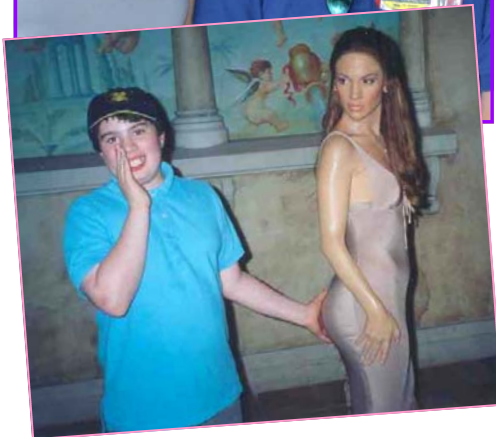
Like any skill, though, social skills can be learned, and Justin is proof of that. We've always tried to impart to him that a good friend listens to others, and that listening is as important a communication skill as speaking, if not more so.

You know how sometimes in order to be polite you feign interest, even when the conversation is mind-numbingly dull? A not-untypical Asperger's response would be to blurt, "This is boring!" and rudely change the subject. Now, we've all been trapped in one-sided conversations where we've *thought* that. But most of us understand social norms enough to know to apply the brakes before the thought escapes out our yaps. For people with AS, accessing that filter doesn't come naturally.

We're lucky that we live on Long Island, which is extremely progressive when it comes to health care and mental-health care. My wife and I are both researchers by trade — Patty has written twenty-four books, including four best-sellers — so as soon as Justin was diagnosed, we learned all that we could about AS, which, back then, wasn't much. We looked into what services we could get to help our son and were happily surprised to discover that a social worker in Nassau County was already running several socialization groups for kids with Asperger's.

We immediately enrolled Justin, to reinforce the lessons we were teaching him at home. In socialization group, kids learn how to be a good friend, how to be socially appropriate in specific situations, how to

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Clockwise: Justin at age 9; with his mom at our July 2004 communal 50th birthday party; and, at 11, putting the squeeze on close personal friend J-Lo at Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum. Pic was hjs dad's warped idea, not Justin's.

My Son, My Hero

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play. I know, it sounds absurd: *Learn to play? Who has to learn how to play?* These kids. Otherwise they will tend to parallel play and not truly interact. Justin has always been more sociable than most of his AS peers — he’s generally had lots of play dates, with typical and atypical children, but to this day, Patty or I have to supervise; there’s no such thing around our house as “Go out and play,” because for a long time he simply didn’t know how.

A woman with Asperger’s wrote a highly regarded book entitled *Pretending to Be Normal*. That pretty much sums up what it can be like to live with Asperger’s syndrome, although I prefer to think of it as *learning* to be normal, not pretending. Because eventually these skills start to come fairly naturally. Not that being “normal” is a big priority around our house; nor do Patty and I believe that fitting in means surrendering one’s individuality. But there’s acceptable behavior and there’s unacceptable behavior. Our son has to know what is generally expected of him, so that he can function in the world and form deep bonds with other people besides Mom and Dad.

A Different Kind of Social Studies: Learning Social Skills

As I noted at the beginning, people with Asperger’s can be extremely bright and do well academically. It’s believed that Albert Einstein may have had AS; Bill Gates, Bob Dylan, and Neil Young, too. There’s been a virtual epidemic of Asperger’s in California’s Silicon Valley. Sometimes that can lull parents into a false sense of security about their kid’s future: *His intelligence will enable him to overcome his social inadequacies*. We always took the opposite view: that an inability to connect with others would undermine Justin’s abilities.

Therefore, while academics was always important to us, it took a back seat to his social progress, especially when he was younger and needed more help in that area. There’s a disturbingly high suicide rate among young people with AS. We were determined that our son was going to have a wonderful childhood and be happy, and he truly is, even at thirteen, when he should be a scowling teenager and not want to be within the same Zip code as his parents.

We’ll go to a party, for instance, where Justin doesn’t know a soul, and he’ll stride right up to a kid his age, stick out his hand and say, “Hi, my name is Justin.

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Resources on Asperger’s Syndrome

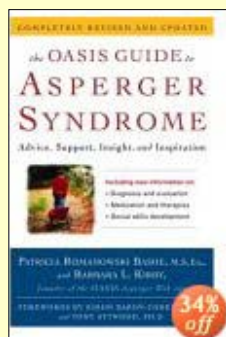
NEPOTISM DOESN’T GET MUCH more blatant than this, but what can I say? My wife’s book and Web site, both coauthored with Barbara Kirby, are the best resources I know of for anyone interested in learning about Asperger’s syndrome.

The OASIS Guide to Asperger Syndrome: Completely Revised and Updated: Advice, Support, Insight, and Inspiration (Crown, 2005), by Patricia Romanowski Bashe, M.S. Ed., and Barbara L. Kirby, has been the best-selling book about on the subject since its original publication in 2001.

That year, Patty decided to change careers and returned to school to earn a masters degree in autism education at C. W. Post,

which is one of the few colleges in the country with an autism-education program. In 2003 and 2004, she taught at a private school for autistic children, Ascent, in Deer Park, before leaving to become executive director of a local parents support and education organization called The David Center. But she continues to do early intervention (EI) work with preschool children in their homes. Needless to say, I’m extremely proud of her.

If you’d like to read more about the *OASIS Guide*, or any of her



other books, go to amazon.com or barnesandnoble.com and conduct a search for *Patricia Romanowski* or *Patricia Romanowski Bashe*.

The OASIS (Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support) Web site, founded by Barb Kirby in 1995 and now co-owned by her and Patty, is a lifeline for people with Asperger’s and those who love them.

Nearly 3.5 million people have visited OASIS for its message board and a treasure trove of information on an exhaustive array of topics, including social-skills strategies, disability and educational rights, and more than I could hope to list here. Check out the site at <http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger>. ■

My Son, My Hero

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What's yours?" Then: "Do you like Cartoon Network? What's your favorite show?"

That's pretty appropriate behavior, although given his druthers, Justin would probably rather ask, "Don't you just love the Messerschmitt ME-262 bomber!" (a World War II era German war plane). Like a lot of people with AS, he has a degree of obsessive-compulsive-like behavior. When these kids develop a "special interest," man, do they ever get into it! And, for some reason having to do with their different way of seeing the world, their interests often involve various forms of technology.

In Australia, where Asperger's syndrome has been on the books, so to speak, for many years, the government has a pen-pal service that matches Aussie "aspies" who share similar interests. Isn't that wild? One thing I've come to appreciate is that although we human beings definitely have free will, perhaps it's governed more than we'd like to admit by our brain chemistry and circuitry.

Justin's fascinations over the years have included some true oddities — for a while he was enthralled by electrical pylons (!), and he can tell you the name of virtually every fire alarm and siren in existence — as well as trains, airplanes, and cars. When he was three, he couldn't name his animals, but he knew the name, number, and function of every engine on *Thomas the Tank Engine*.

Now, when I was a kid, I was the same way with baseball statistics and lore. In seventh grade, a terrific social studies teacher at Jericho, Mr. Tony LaRocca, used to occasionally halt class ten minutes early to play "Stump Phil" on baseball trivia. It's funny how that's considered socially

acceptable — though when you think about it, what's more *useless* than knowing how many triples Roger Maris hit in 1960? — whereas reeling off the birthplace and hat size of every U.S. president (an only slightly exaggerated example) would instantly brand someone with AS as a mega-nerd.

"Face Blindness"

Patty and I have always explained to Justin that while it's great he has these interests, he has to appreciate that probably not every other kid is going to share them. That's just reality. And we've taught him to be aware of the subtle cues indicating when it's time to change topics, like a roll of the eyes. Except that kids with AS, including my son, often have what is called "face blindness," or an inability to recognize and read people's facial expressions.

Researchers at Yale University conducted a study in which people with AS were shown a video of people speaking to one another. And the



Justin, 13, in his classroom, which includes four other seventh-graders and four eighth-graders with Asperger's syndrome.

doctors observed that many in the audience focused solely on the mouths moving. They didn't pick up on raised eyebrows, flaring nostrils, and so forth. You can see, then, why they would be prone to misinterpreting other people's words and actions.

They also tend to miss the nuances in people's speech patterns and to process expressions literally. One time in second grade, at recess, a friend of Justin's playfully taunted, "You can't catch me!" Justin got upset, because he thought his friend was being mean. Today he wouldn't make that same mistake, because we've taught him to recognize the meaning of a scowl or a smirk, and to decipher a sarcastic tone — something heard frequently around our house.

When he goes on and on a bit too long about something — usually sirens, trains, planes, cars, etc. — I'll say, "Hey, Justin, you're a smart kid. You know lots of stuff. Let's talk about something else." And he'll segue neatly into something else. Some kids, though, are so obsessive that they can't budge from the subject until they've finished their monologue.

Humor is a very effective tool with Justin. I used to work in TV, and sometimes I'll simply hold up my index finger and rotate it around and around like a floor manager in a TV studio: Okay, *let's wrap it up!* We do a lot of laughing around our house, and Justin has always had a great, playful — though frequently scatological — sense of humor. Upon hearing a car backfire at age four: "Hey, Dad, that car is having a *valve* movement!" He's always been big on word plays a la Monty Python, *Fawlty Towers*, and *Black Adder*. Incidentally, you'd be amazed how many opportunities Justin gets to indulge his inter

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Instamatic Moments



Pictures From Back When You Were Adorable* ...

Debra Traikos, Debbi Nathel, and Beverly Weissman looking lovely



Beth Mulnick ('74), Lori Light, and Abby Zweibel too



Jerry Dikowitz and Steven Lehrer, back when ties were wide enough to double as bibs.



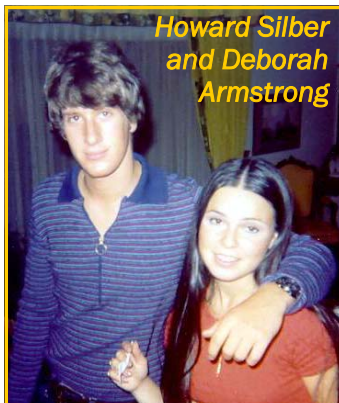
Neil Goldman, Randi Blatt, and Mindy Wertheimer

THE EVENT: PRE-PROM PARTY
THE DATE: SATURDAY, JUNE 17, 1972
THE PLACE: DEBBI NATHEL'S BACKYARD, 27 CRAIG STREET, WEST BIRCHWOOD

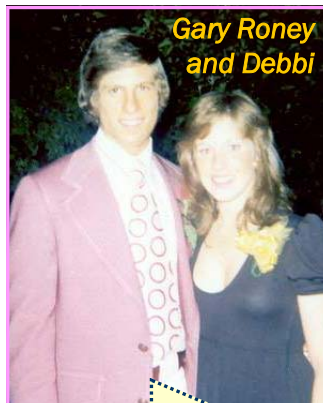
Setting the scene: After initially rejecting the idea of a prom, the class decided at the last minute to have a low-key affair at the school. Debbi Nathel threw a pre-prom party.



Michael Lewis



Howard Silber and Deborah Armstrong



Gary Roney and Debbi

And then there was the prom itself. Truly magical! Remember the traditional dousing the prom queen with pig's blood? Boy, somebody sure couldn't take a practical joke! What was her name again? Started with a C, I think. Good times!



* Don't worry, you're *still* adorable! (Photos courtesy of Debbi Nathel Kazan)

Wanna learn what some of your former teachers are up to? Then drop in, pull up a chair, set a spell, but most of all — NO TALKING! — at the ...

Faculty Lounge



This Issue:
Mr. Paul Hall

Paul Hall came to Jericho in 1964 as an English teacher. Just two years later — our first at Jericho Junior High — he was promoted to housemaster of House A in the short-lived housemaster program, for which we served as unwitting guinea pigs. After a stint in the central office, in 1970 Mr. Hall became assistant principal of the high school, where he stayed through 1973 before returning to the Levittown School District as a principal.



You might remember that Mr. Hall's nickname was Tall Paul Hall. ("Do you remember the song the kids used to sing about me in the hall?" he asks. "Paul Hall is so tall/Doesn't have any brains at all.") For the record, Mr. Paul stood six-feet-six. Today, at age seventy-nine, he says, "I'm more like six-feet-four-and-a-half."



I didn't start teaching until I was thirty-six years old. During World War II, I did a couple of years in the infantry in Europe, managed to get myself shot, but came through it okay. Then I came home to Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn.

When I went away, I was eighteen and engaged to a girl about the same age. I came home matured by my

experiences as a combat infantryman, but my fiancée was still eighteen. She hadn't done a lot of growing up.

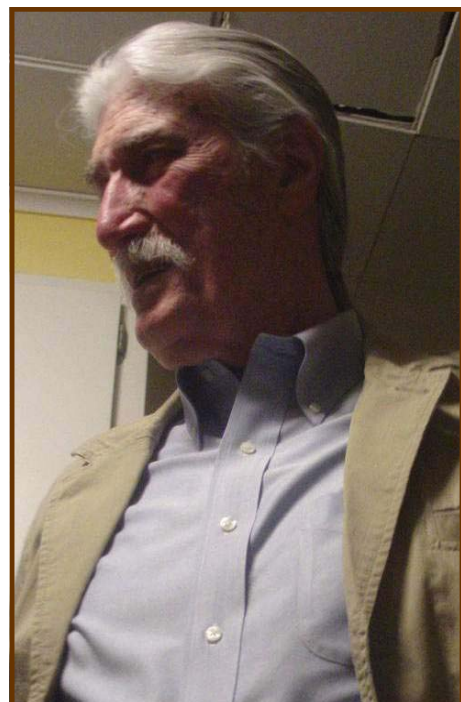
So that relationship fell apart. I wound up marrying a woman eight years older than me. Now, nobody did that back then. What's more, she was divorced, with three children. I was getting a lot of advice from my mother's friends, and I told them all to take a hike!

Marrying her was the best thing I ever did. The only problem was, I drove a dry-cleaning truck at the time. One day I had a reasonable salary, the next day I had a family of five to support!

My stepchildren, who were eight, nine, and eleven years old, had been living with their grandmother and aunt in a cramped apartment in Washington Heights since the divorce. My wife, a nurse, was concerned about them.

"Paul," she said before we married and moved to an apartment in Kew Gardens, Queens, "the kids have been through such turmoil. I really would like to stay home for a

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Mr. Paul Hall

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while, just to make sure that they're going to be okay as adults." We agreed to that.

Financially it was a struggle, especially after we bought a house in Levittown. You know how much the deposit was? Ten dollars! But we had a good life, and the children were coming along nicely. I wrote an article for *Coronet* magazine about what it was like to raise a stepfamily, although I've always considered them my own kids.

Now It's Your Turn

When you have the soul of a poet, driving a truck isn't necessarily the best way to spend nine years. But it's what I had to do. One day in 1962 my wife announced: "Paul, now we take care of you: I'm going back to work." She did it to give me an opportunity to become an English teacher, which is something I'd always wanted to do. Why? Because as a kid, I'd had some marvelous experiences with teachers who showed me what life could be like.

Although I had a bachelor of arts degree, I had only a provisional teaching certificate. Still, I got an interview at Levittown's Division Avenue High School with the chairman of the English Department. At thirty-six, I was hardly your typical job applicant, but I got the position.

And almost lost it before I even started. I've always been a writer. Months earlier, I'd written a racy sort of article on the art of seduction, which I'd hope to sell to *Playboy*. That magazine turned it down, but the piece did get accepted by some cheap version of *Playboy*. I don't remember the name of it.

Now, go back to 1962 and think about how straitlaced we were.

Teachers didn't have sex lives! So here I've just started the school year at Division Avenue, and the magazine publishes my article, "How to Seduce Somebody." And just down the road from the school is this pharmacy/stationery store, which happens to sell the magazine.

I thought to myself, *What have you done?! Somebody's going to see the byline "Paul Hall" in this trashy magazine full of voluptuous breasts, and I'm going to get fired!* I went down to the store and bought up every single copy; the guy at the counter must have thought I was some kind of a nut. Then I held my breath, because I couldn't buy every single copy in the world. But luckily, the magazine was so tawdry, no one

"I have such good feelings about Jericho. The kids were great. Well, kids are great. Without sounding too syrupy, I think kids will do anything for you if you touch a nerve and treat them with respect."

in Levittown ever saw it — at least, not that I know of!

Welcome to Jericho

One night in 1964 I was at a party with a bunch of teachers from Levittown. A former Levittown teacher, now chairman of the English department at Jericho Junior High School, was there. We got to talking, and I told him that I was so happy teaching in Levittown I could barely breathe.

Apparently my enthusiasm impressed him. He said, "I want to hire you! Would you come to Jericho?" You all know my answer.

In 1966, the same year that my family built a house in Smithtown, they started the housemaster program. I was promoted to housemaster of House A. It was really an assistant principalship.

I have such good feelings about Jericho. The kids were great. Well, kids are great. Without sounding too syrupy, I think that kids will do anything for you if you touch a nerve and treat them with respect.

After two years as housemaster, I accepted another promotion, this one in the central office, as assistant to the superintendent of personnel. I liked it well enough, but one day there was a fire drill, and all the kids were mingling around outside.

I looked out the window at them and had an epiphany: *What am I doing in here? I should be out there!* I told David Nydick, our superintendent, that I wanted to be in touch with the kids again. "Okay," he said, and the next thing I knew, starting in 1970, I was transferred to the high school as assistant principal. I was back on the right track.

It was a time of drugs. God, it seemed like every time we turned around, somebody was being hauled off. Immodestly, I'll tell you, I did some good work there, I really did. And so did the other assistant principal, George Batjiaka.

As happy as I was in Jericho, I'd always wanted my own building, and with Paul McKee having only recently taken over as high-school principal, that wasn't likely to happen anytime soon. So when an offer came from Levittown to return there as principal of Jonas Salk Junior High School, I jumped at it.

I retired in 1989, the same year I retired from teaching at Nassau Community College. I loved both jobs, from the beginning, but I'd seen guys wait too long before hanging

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Mr. Paul Hall

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it up, and they had this look on their faces, like: *Grrrrrrrrrr!* I wanted to leave before I ever reached that point.

My wife, who died nine years ago, used to say to me, "You always see the rosy side of things." Frankly, I always wanted to be a curmudgeon, and I'm working on it, okay? But I really am very grateful for the things that have happened to me, because I came from nothing. During the Depression, my family lived in squalor. For years we had no heat, no hot water, no gas. But somehow we got through it together. Today I never get in the shower without thinking, *Boy, hot water!* That's the basis of my optimism.

Today: Writing Screenplays, Sculpting, Yoga, and Walking the Dog

In retirement, I have an unspectacular life, but it's a great life. My Labrador retriever's excretory system sets my agenda for the day. Aside from that, the rest of the day belongs to me, and I do whatever the hell I want. I'm in the middle of writing my fifth screenplay, I sculpt, I'm teaching myself the piano, and I'm studying yoga. Before that, I'd studied tai chi for four years. I also shave and bathe every day, because I don't want to be the crazy old guy who smells on top of a hill with his crazy dog!

My grandkids are all adults now. My stepdaughter Judy has three children. One of them, Paul McCormick, is a significant poet. He's brilliant. My stepson lives in Sweden. He's an extremely religious Jew, because his biological father was Jewish. Then there's my biological daughter, who lives in New Jersey. She was in hospital administration. Then she decided that there was more to life than fifteen-hour days and quit. She adopted a child from China and studied to become an Episcopal priest. And she couldn't be happier! Isn't that marvelous?

So I've got a Chinese granddaughter, a daughter who's a priest, a Jewish-Swedish son (with a Lutheran wife and son). All we need now is an American Indian, and we'll have all the bases covered! ■

35th Reunion Update: Come July 4th, It's Time to Vote!

Continued from page 1

- If you vote to have the party in Florida, Saturday, November 10, 2007 (a three-day weekend, due to Veterans Day), would appear to be ideal. A Florida party needs to be later in the fall because of hurricane season. Air fares are extremely low during this time, plus it's still three or four weeks before Thanksgiving, when people might be traveling and not want to make two trips so close together. ■

Hall of Fame: Mike Milner

Continued from page 3

Trade Center collapsed, Mike was crawling his way through the PATH subway station at Church Street, three levels down, searching in vain for an entrance into the wreckage. In 1995, he assisted in the recovery effort following the Oklahoma City bombing.

Rescue 4, an elite unit specializing in all manner of rescue, was the subject of a multi-part NBC-TV documentary in 2002. Just months before the terrorist attacks of September 11, on Father's Day, the company lost two of its men at a fire in Queens.

Mike still lives in Jericho — right across from the high school, in fact — with his wife, Melissa, and sons Jason (seven) and Tyler (five). ■

Hall of Fame: A Businessman, A Filmmaker, and a Dentist

Continued from page 3

million for the families. He has had to overcome other tragedies in his life, including the deaths of both parents before he was even out of his teens.

Ellen Friedland (1976) is an attorney turned journalist and award-winning documentary filmmaker. With her husband, Curt Fissel, she founded Voices and Visions Productions, Ltd., a full-service video and multimedia company



headquartered in Montclair, New Jersey. Ellen is also the president of a nonprofit video production outfit, JEM/GLO, which produces documentaries on Jewish communities and issues around the world. This year the couple won a Communicator Award of Distinction for their most recent documentary, *Klezmer Musicians Travel "Home" to Krakow*.

Dr. Diane Krencik (1975) is a dentist in Woodbridge, New Jersey, and a clinical instructor at New Jersey Dental School, as well as an environmentalist. Diane lives in West Birchwood, Jericho. ■

My Son, My Hero

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ests. Would you believe that there are thousands of Web sites devoted to steam engines, World War II era war planes, and even sirens (check out airraidsirens.com for a fun-zerrific time!). I'm convinced that a good number of these sites are run by people with you-know-what!

As I noted before, people with Asperger's tend to be somewhat rigid and fearful of new situations. While we have to be sensitive to that, we don't want it to limit Justin, either. So I initiated what I call the something-old, something-new rule. We take the train into Manhattan a lot. Being a creature of habit, Justin would be perfectly happy to do nothing else besides prowl the train platforms at Penn Station and Grand Central. And we do that. But then we *have* to go somewhere we've never been before. Hey, rules are rules.

At first this made Justin a little uneasy, but with each new adventure — to the U.S.S. Intrepid (where we visited with Mark Albin, then its promotion and marketing director), the MTA Transit Museum in Brooklyn, the NYFD Fire Museum, the Museum of Natural History, the NBC Studio Tour, the Empire State Building, whatever — he discovered how much he enjoyed himself, to the point where he's become extremely adaptable.

We bike down to Jones Beach, ride go-carts, play lazar tag, and do lots of things that a few years ago would have been unthinkable because they probably would have induced a borderline panic attack. Last summer I got him to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Now he wants to go back.

This is how adaptable he's become: From kindergarten through through fifth grade, the J-Mon attended the Baldwin Meadow School.

It's a regular elementary school, but most of our district's special-needs kids go there; I'd estimate about eighty or so in all.

It makes for a very healthy environment, because it normalizes disabilities. At the Meadow School, it's commonplace to see kids rolling down the halls on their wheelchairs or bopping into the nurse's office for their eleven o'clock dose of Ritalin.

Because social-interaction doesn't come naturally to people with Asperger's syndrome, from ages six to eleven or so Justin attended a socialization group with other AS kids. Together they learned to make conversation, share, and play. Most adults I know could benefit from social-skills training ...

Typical kids benefit, too. Not only do they learn compassion for others, they get to see firsthand how hard some children have to work in order to do things that they might take for granted — like walking or reading — which serves to instill respect and admiration.

Justin was in a self-contained classroom and mainstreamed wherever appropriate. His last year there, he won the Pat Goodman Award, given to the student who has overcome the most challenges. The award is named for a teacher who showed great courage in continuing to teach despite a terminal illness.

All things considered, the Baldwin school system has done a terrific job for Justin. But the middle school here simply does not have any sort of autism program, at least not yet. So there was no question that he

would be better served by a new program being started by the Lawrence school district.

So, at the age of eleven, Justin had to go to a new school where he didn't know *anybody*. And, for the first time, he'd be taking a school bus. (I'd always driven him to school, which I miss; it truly was the highlight of my day!) Naturally we were concerned — all right, worried sick — about how he would handle such a major transition. From the very first day, Justin was the picture of calm. He even ate in the cafeteria, something he hadn't done in years, because the noise level had been too much.

After his first week in Lawrence, I told him how incredibly proud I was of him. "Justin, when I was your age, I would have been a nervous wreck if I'd had to go to a new school where I didn't know anyone." And I would have been!

"Really?" Because Justin lacks theory of mind, it never occurs to him that other people — adults in particular — face some of the same problems that he does. So it comes as a revelation for him to discover that *everybody* gets anxious or frustrated from time to time.

Back to the Beginning (I Told You This Was Going to Be Disjointed)

It's funny how a number of choices my wife and I made years before Justin was even born have turned out to contribute to his progress, starting with the decision to not have a child until we'd been together for eleven years.

Patty and I met in 1979. I'd recently returned to Long Island after four years of college in Buffalo, New York, followed by two years in radio and TV, publishing my own ersatz *Rolling Stone*-type magazine, and writing for the *Buffalo Evening News*.

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I was the editor-in-chief of *Good Times* magazine, then a 128-page would-be *Village Voice* for Long Island. One day I received a résumé and a bunch of impressive writing samples from some guy named Pat Romanowski of the Bronx, so I called him up to assign him an album review; it was the Police's *Regatta de Blanc*. That's when I discovered he was a she.

After a four-month phone friendship, I met her for lunch while in Manhattan to interview the Ramones. It was love at first sight, we moved in together a year later, in Port Washington, and have been married since 1983. Two years later we decided to go slumming on the South Shore of L.I. and bought our house in Baldwin. Actually, we like it here a lot.

Patty soon became the editor-in-chief of Rolling Stone Press, the book division of *Rolling Stone*, while I moved on to become editor of two national music and entertainment magazines.

Books, Books, Books

Both of us fell into writing books in 1986 somewhat accidentally. Patty had decided to leave publishing and go to law school to become a publishing attorney, when she got a call to cowrite a book with Mary Wilson of the Supremes. Being a huge Motown fan, she figured why not? It probably wouldn't sell much, but it would help pay her tuition.

That book was *Dreamgirl*, her first best-seller. Then Warner Books asked her if she wanted to cowrite Vanna White's autobio. Again, more money for law school. That, too, was a best-seller, amazingly.

By the time of her third book, with Otis Williams of the Tempta-

tions, Patty realized she really enjoyed this. She tended to coauthor so-called celebrity autobiographies (with LaToya Jackson, Donny Osmond, Annette Funicello, Teddy Pendergrass, and Nichelle Nichols of *Star Trek*, to name a few), as well as an extremely popular series about psychic communication (*We Don't Die* was the first). Then she moved



Place look familiar? Milleridge Inn

more into books intended to help people in crisis, like *How to Help Your Children Through Divorce* and, of course, the *OASIS Guide to Asperger Syndrome*. Her books with Otis Williams and Annette were made into TV movies.

Meanwhile, I decided to leave magazines and entertainment writing to write books on a broad range of topics, such as parenting (*Caring for Your Teenager: The Complete Comprehensive Guide*, Bantam, 2003), popular culture (Mel Blanc's *That's Not All, Folks! My Life in the Golden Age of Cartoons and Radio*, Warner Books, 1988), sports (*Dog Days: The New York Yankees' Fall From Grace*

and *Return to Glory, 1964-1976*, Random House, 1994), and, in particular, science and health. Among my titles in that area are: *The Complete Bedside Companion: No-Nonsense Advice on Caring for the Seriously Ill* (Simon and Shuster, 1998) and *The Complete Cancer Survival Guide* (Doubleday, 2000), the revised edition of which will be published in November.

I'm currently finishing a book on chronic pain, with Dr. Peter S. Staats, director of pain medicine at Johns Hopkins, and my first book about business, for Harvard Business School Press. I find it all interesting and feel grateful that I get paid to constantly immerse myself in new subjects. Books really suit my somewhat anal-compulsive nature (*me, anal? Naw!*), affording me the time to truly dig deep into a subject through research and interviews.

But the biggest plus of all has been being able to be a full-time parent to Justin, who came along in 1991. Patty and I had both been ambivalent about having a child, and we felt strongly that we wouldn't travel that path unless it felt absolutely right to both of us. It's too important a responsibility to take on with anything less than a full commitment from both partners.

As an only child, I didn't have much experience around kids, although I always enjoyed other people's children. As for Patty, who was born in Kansas, she'd basically raised her youngest sister. Her father was a drinker and a gambler who moved the family around a lot. By the time Patty graduated from high school in 1974, she'd attended twenty-two schools in six states.

In 1971, she was fifteen and living in Tulare, California, when her mother died of pancreatic cancer. Just days later, she and her two sisters were whisked to the Bronx,

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where her father was living with his new wife — a woman he'd left at the altar twenty-five years earlier to marry the woman he married before marrying Patty's mom. (Scorecard, anyone?) So she didn't have any starry-eyed illusions about what it means to raise a child.

Plus, we were really enjoying our life together, which was full of travel and fun/funny adventures, like having Otis Williams of the Tempts teach us the choreography to "The You Do the Things You Do" after dinner; or having Mary Wilson sleeping on the couch in the living room while she and Patty were working together; or me staying in Elvis's house in Palm Springs when I was out there conducting interviews for a biography I wrote about Rick Nelson, *Teenage Idol, Travelin' Man* (Hyperion 1992). Writing books can be extremely difficult and stressful. But because our hours were totally flexible, if we felt like going to lunch down by the docks in the afternoon, or taking in a movie, or gardening all day, we could do it. To me, the best thing that money buys is the freedom to do what you want.

But around 1990, having a child began to feel right; the next dimension of life. Patty got pregnant right away. Now, there's a lot of speculation regarding the cause of autism, which has increased dramatically in incidence in the last ten years, from 1 in 1,000 to 1 in 150. Certainly a genetic predisposition exists. Patty has traces of Asperger's syndrome — for instance, she refers to herself as being "socially ambivalent" — although you would *never* guess it. She's by far the finest and most accomplished person I know.

About two years ago, a study discovered an association between autism and high stress at the start of

the mother's third trimester. It had to do with the effect of the stress hormone cortisol. Frankly, I don't know if that study has ever been corroborated, but it's interesting, because here's what was going on in our lives right at the start of Patty's third trimester:

Mary, her younger sister, had a husband dying of AIDS, while Johnetta, then only twenty-six, was caring for her fiancé as he was dying

In the moment that Dr. Snyder told us our son had autism, everything changed. And yet nothing changed. Simply by being responsive to our son's needs over the years, we'd been treating his Asperger's syndrome all along without knowing it.

from lung cancer at the age of thirty-four, which is extremely rare. The two of them died two weeks apart, in October 1991. Justin was born on December 21, 1991.

What's more, my stepmom, Rachelle, was recuperating from second-look surgery for stage IV ovarian cancer. (Today, as a fifteen-year survivor, she is truly one for the record books. Born in Belgium, and one of the "hidden children" saved from the Nazis by nuns, the French resistance movement, and common folks, she's also dodged breast cancer. She's an amazing person.) So, stress? Yeah, I'd say there was stress in our lives.

Justin's birth was what I would call transcendental. All in all, he was an easy baby, and an absolute joy. There were things about him that were *different*, but they seemed to be explainable. Like his hypersensitive hearing: Well, our house is fairly

quiet, so it wasn't inconceivable that loud or shrill noises should bother him.

Likewise, his occasional awkwardness around other children could be explained by the fact that he was an only child who didn't go to school until he was three. He didn't draw pictures, but as our pediatrician pointed out, "*Somebody* has to be the last kid to start drawing." Besides, he had other skills. In retrospect, I think the fact that he was so verbal and bright blinded us and his pediatrician to his development deficits. He didn't appear to have attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), and he certainly didn't meet the criteria for autism — at least not autism as we understood it then.

But in 1997, when he was five, he seemed to deteriorate. The sensitivity to noise was becoming a major intrusion in his life. Then he had what I would call almost post-traumatic stress disorder. He was at summer camp, standing under a fire bell, when it went off and couldn't be turned off. For the rest of the summer he was extremely anxious and prone to what we call meltdowns.

These aren't tantrums so much as they are moments where his nervous system gets overloaded and overwhelms him. It's less willful than reactionary, and is compounded by the fact that he also has Tourette's syndrome. Once he lost it, it could take ten minutes to reel him back in.

We took Justin to see a pediatric psychiatrist, not sure at all what the outcome would be. To his credit, Dr. James Snyder, M.D., accurately diagnosed Justin after spending just one session with him. He called me and Patty into his office and slid a piece of paper over to us. It listed the symptoms of something called Asperger's syndrome. It wasn't an exact fit, he explained, but it seemed pretty close. And indeed it did.

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We're so fortunate that our son was diagnosed so quickly and at a relatively young age. We know folks whose kids were misdiagnosed for years — and treated accordingly — before a doctor finally arrived at the correct verdict.

In the moment that Dr. Snyder told us our son had a form of autism, everything changed. "You'll probably have to alter your expectations for Justin," he said gently, as Patty wept.

And yet, in a sense, nothing changed. Just by being responsive to our son's needs — the hypersensitive hearing, the anxiety — we'd been treating him for Asperger's syndrome all along. We just didn't have a name for it. Now we did. To me, frankly, it came as a bit of a relief.

I know some parents will do anything to deny a verdict of autism. Me? I embrace the A word. It's what Justin has; I really don't care what you call it. I'm not a big fan of euphemisms for *handicap*, either. Call it a "challenge" or a "difference" or a "disability," but believe me, it's a handicap. But handicaps can be compensated for and sometimes even overcome.

I also knew that a diagnosis of autism would help us get Justin the educational services he needed. I come across parents who worry about the "stigma" of autism. And they'll twist themselves in knots trying to hide it, not even telling relatives or their child's school. Meanwhile, their kid is having meltdowns on a regular basis, hitting other kids, and it's being attributed to bad behavior. Do they think *that* isn't stigmatizing? And do they think that's being fair to their child, who is suffering needlessly?

(An aside: As a parent of a developmentally disabled youngster, you have to be careful not to over-

pathologize behavior. There can be a tendency to always blame misconduct on medication or the disorder, and to forget that this is still a five- or ten- or fifteen-year-old kid. There are times when Justin's a cranky little creep, period, just like any other kid. Or adult, for that matter. After a while, you get pretty good at discerning the true source of your child's behavior.)

Why Men Are the Inferior Species

I've always been a big fan of women, and after having been dropped abruptly into special-ed world, my admiration for moms has only deepened, especially when I hear stories about husbands splitting because they "couldn't handle it." Funny, I don't think the mothers were ever offered a choice.

I can't tell you how many times other moms have told me (yes, I consider myself an honorary mom; I believe I've more than earned the necessary credits) that although their child was found to have AS years ago, "my husband still won't accept it."

I'd love to say to hubby, "You know what, you narcissistic jerk? *This isn't about you*, it's about your kid. And no matter how sad or angry you may feel, imagine how much worse it is for your child. Go get psychological help if you need it, but get to work on helping your son or daughter find his/her place in the world."

Along similar lines, I encounter lots of parents who are resistant to the idea that their child might benefit from medication. Justin has been helped in countless ways from low doses of (1) an SSRI antidepressant/anxiolytic, (2) an atypical neuroleptic called Risperdal, and (3) Adderall, a Ritalin knockoff.

I think some parents' reluctance to incorporate medication as one

component of their child's treatment plan — I don't believe that any single modality provides the whole answer; it usually takes a multidisciplinary approach — reflects their refusal to accept the seriousness of the diagnosis, as well as people's misconceptions about psychiatric medications in general.

When I talk to parents like this, I always make an analogy to diabetes. If your son or daughter had diabetes and required injections of the hormone insulin, you wouldn't hesitate to give it to them. Why is a neurological disorder regarded any differently?

We've told Justin that his medications don't change who he is. To the contrary, their purpose is to help the real Justin shine. Since he's big on technology, I've also put it to him this way: Asperger's syndrome is like static interfering with radio station WJUS, and the drugs he takes help him to tune in the signal more clearly.

Justin's first of several neuropsych evaluations, performed in 1998, shed additional light on his learning disabilities. He has what's called poor executive function. Imagine a cluttered, disorganized computer hard drive. That's the J-Mon's brain. Sometimes he will take a long time to answer a question, even when you *know* he knows the answer. It's as if the hard drive in his brain is spinning around and around, trying to retrieve that information. He also has poor short-term memory. His long-term memory, though, is remarkable, enabling him to recall places and events from when he was as young as two years old.

We told Justin that he had Asperger's syndrome and what it was when he was around seven and old enough to understand its implications. It seemed to come as a relief to him. He'd been becoming in-

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LAST PAGE — HONEST!

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creasingly frustrated watching his friends do things that he couldn't, like reading and writing. Many people with Asperger's have poor fine-motor control. Again, the problem isn't with the muscles, it's with the neurological connections to the muscles. One day he became extremely upset.

"What's wrong with my hands?" he cried. "Why did God make me this way?" As you can imagine, it was extraordinarily painful for a parent to hear.

I told him this: that everybody has strengths as well as areas where they have to work a little harder. I pointed out the things that he was good at, like being funny, and telling great, imaginative stories. And I confided that sometimes I feel stupid too, like when I'm just getting started writing about a complex subject, and maybe I misinterpret something.

"You do?" he asked in amazement. (Once again, that inability to generalize. In his mind, he was the only person in the world to struggle with reading and writing.) I also told him that I wouldn't change a single thing about him, not even his having Asperger's syndrome — well, I would if I could, for his sake — because that's what makes him Justin, and I love everything about Justin exactly the way he is.

And that's the truth. One thing I've always been grateful for is our son's sweet, affectionate nature, and the compassion and empathy he exhibits. These are not typical characteristics of people on the spectrum. We knew all along that we would have one child, and I have to admit that I'd probably be grieving if Justin weren't as emotionally connected as he is.

Despite everything, our son is surprisingly confident and self-assertive. We've always worked hard to buoy his self-esteem, all the while crossing our fingers that he'd finally surmount some of his barriers to learning. And now he has, regularly bringing home 85s and 90s on his social studies, science, and spelling tests. Will Justin go to college? Truthfully, I would doubt it, although this is the same kid we were once told would never read, so we're not ruling out the possibility. As of now, he has his heart set on working with — you guessed it — technology

as a train repairman for the Long Island Railroad. If he still feels that way in a year or two, I plan on contacting the LIRR about Justin. He may have some learning disabilities, but I can promise them that he'd be their most enthusiastic employee, hands down.

As well as Justin is doing socially and academically, there are still unanticipated setbacks from time to time. For instance, in April, we had to suddenly wean him off the SSRI drug Paxil CR and switch to Lexapro, because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration had forced the drug manufacturer to withdraw it abruptly due to some safety issues at its factories. You don't alter someone's brain chemistry that quickly without encountering some problems, and we did for a while, although he appears to be adjusting to the Lexapro pretty well.

It's times like that when I sometimes get depressed about our son's future, especially given that we have little family. Both Patty's parents have been dead for twenty-five years, while my mother died of breast cancer in 1984, and Justin has few aunts, uncles, and cousins. What will happen to him after we're gone? Will he be able to make his way in world?

Above all else, will he find happiness with another person? Because he's so sweet and loving, I'd like to think so. Girls have always seemed to like Justin. For his part, Justin says he'd like to get married (and "be a great dad, just like you, Dad!"), although the thought of moving away from Mom and Dad is abhorrent to him. "My wife and I will always live with you guys!" he'll say brightly.

Then there are the days when I think he'll be all right. Riverhead, Long Island, is home to a small museum called the Railroad Museum of Long Island. Justin, naturally, is a frequent visitor. In April, Patty took him there, and he struck up a conversation with two of the men who volunteer at the museum. They were so impressed with Justin's knowledge of trains, they asked him if he'd like to become a volunteer and run the G-scale outdoor garden train. Naturally Justin was thrilled.

But Patty felt it was only fair to quietly let the director, a retired LIRR engineer, know that Justin is autistic. "So what?" he said with a shrug. As you can see, Justin started volunteering there Memorial Day Weekend! ■



Memorial Day: Justin weeding the garden train's tracks on his first day volunteering at the Railroad Museum of L.I.

Your Back Pages

“I was so much older then, I’m younger than that now.” — Bob Dylan

You wish!

The World Around You • Year One A.G.*, 1972-73

**After Graduation*

◆ Peace at last. Only weeks after the U.S. resumed bombing North Vietnam, on January 23, 1973, President Richard Nixon announces the signing of a peace agreement. In mid-February, our soldiers start returning home. The final death toll for U.S. troops: approximately 57,000.

◆ Meet the new boss: On January 4, 1973, a syndicate headed by Cleveland shipping tycoon George Steinbrenner buys the New York Yankees from CBS for \$10 million. The new owner tells reporters that he “will not be active in the day-to-day operations” of the team. That’s right. Minute-to-minute is more like it. On the last day of the season (and the final game at the original Yankee Stadium, set for a two-year facelift), Ralph Houk becomes the only manager to quit Steinbrenner’s employ rather than be sacked.

◆ On May 17, 1973, the Watergate Committee, headed by Sen. Sam Ervin (D-North Carolina), begins public hearings into the previous June’s Watergate burglary. Over the coming months, the televised hearings introduce such language into the contemporary lexicon as “enemies list” and “stonewall,” and we also learn that all Oval Office conversations have been secretly recorded since 1971. We’ll discover a lot more in the months ahead.

◆ The athletic feats of America’s Mark Spitz (seven gold medals) and Russian gymnast Olga Korbut are overshadowed by the worst tragedy in Olympic history. The morning of September 5, 1972, eight Palestinian terrorists storm the Olympic Village in Munich, Germany, killing two Israeli athletes and kidnapping nine more. After a day of unsuccessful negotiations, they take their hostages to a military airport. A gun battle breaks out, during which all nine Israelis are killed.

CEASE-FIRE!
 * * * * *
All GIs Out of Viet in 60 Days

Compiled From AP and UPI
 WASHINGTON — President Nixon announced Tuesday night that a Vietnam cease-fire will go into effect Saturday night with all American troops to be withdrawn within 60 days, coinciding with return of all American prisoners.
 The announcement was made simultaneously in Washington, Saigon and Hanoi.
 Nixon said agreement has been reached with North Vietnam to end the Indochina war with...

PACIFIC STARS AND STRIPES
 AN AUTHORIZED UNOFFICIAL PUBLICATION FOR THE U.S. ARMED FORCES OF THE PACIFIC COMMAND
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Your Back Pages

The World Around You • Year One A.G.*, 1972-73

** After Graduation*

Continued from previous page

ON THE RADIO: Elton John, "Crocodile Rock" • Rod Stewart, "You Wear It Well" • Helen Reddy, "I Am Woman" • Paul McCartney and Wings, "Live and Let Die" • Temptations, "Papa Was a Rolling Stone" • Carly Simon, "You're So Vain" (written about Warren Beatty) • "Killing Me Softly With His Song," Roberta Flack (written about Don McLean) • David Bowie, "Space Oddity" • Pink Floyd, *The Dark Side of the Moon*

ON THE BIG SCREEN: *Superfly* • *Deliverance* • *Lady Sings the Blues* • *Last Tango in Paris* • *Deep Throat*

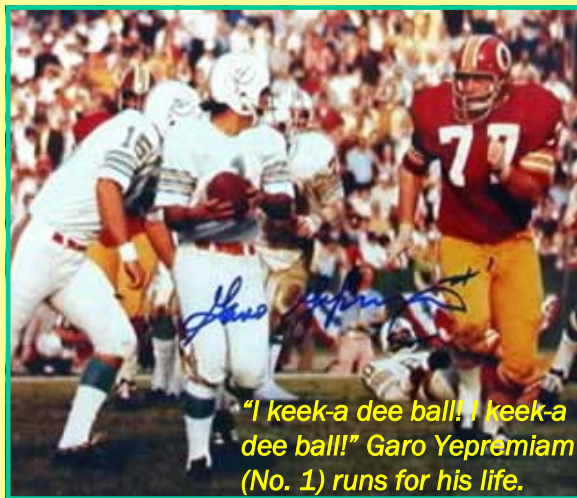
ON THE TUBE: "All in the Family" • "Sanford and Son" • "Maude" • "Mary Tyler Moore Show" • "Hawaii Five-O" • "Bridget Loves Bernie" • "Ironside" • "Adam 12" • "An American Family"



Ziggy Stardust: I just flew in from Mars, ladies and germs, and, boy, are my arms tired ..."

In Sports:

- ◆ The Oakland A's edge Cincinnati's Big Red Machine in seven, despite the absence of injured Reggie Jackson and star reliever Darold Knowles. Six of the games are decided by one run. Series MVP Gene Tenace slugs four home runs — one more than he managed all season.
- ◆ The Miami Dolphins complete their perfect season with a 14-7 Super Bowl VII victory over the Washington Redskins in front of 90,000 spectators at the Los Angeles Coliseum. The 'Skins' only score comes on a comical play with two minutes left, when a Dolphins field-goal attempt goes awry. Place-kicker Garo Yepremian scoops up the fumbled snap, briefly considers passing, then drops the ball right into the hands of defensive back Mike Bass, who runs it back for a 49-yard TD.
- ◆ The Knicks, led by Earl Monroe, Walt Frazier, and Bill Bradley, bring a second NBA title to New York, beating the L.A. Lakers in five. In the ABA, the Indiana Pacers edge the Kentucky Colonels four games to three.
- ◆ The Montreal Canadiens win the Stanley Cup over the Chicago Blackhawks in six games.



"I keek-a dee ball! I keek-a dee ball!" Garo Yepremian (No. 1) runs for his life.