

Background story to “There’s a Flame “ photo and accompanying statement

I have manic depression. I was attending my first candlelight vigil in Oct. 93, after 6 months of doing really well and being involved beyond myself in the ‘consumer’ movement. As the daylight was fading and we were standing with our candles glowing a photographer started lining up shots and flashing away at the group.

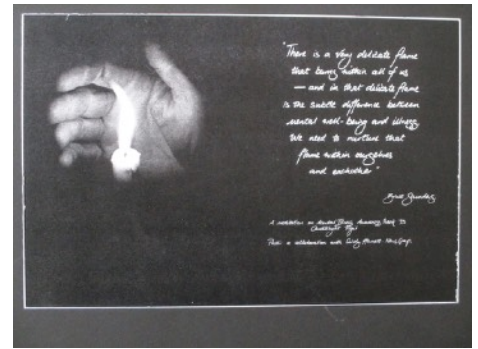
Having a background in photography I stepped out of line and suggested she try using the light of the candle thusly. Cindy Harnett took a bunch of shots of my hand sheltering the flame and then we got talking. Turned out she is the editor of a weekly, this was for tomorrow’s deadline and would I and another vigil-er like to come back to the office to give some of our take on mental illness/health?

While we were talking in the little interview room the darkroom tech. came to the door with a beautiful dripping wet 11 x 14 enlargement. That night, being a little buzzy from the heady experience of having someone listen, knowing that image would be on the front page and that Cindy was up through the wee hours putting that article together, I called her and dictated the words to go with the image.

I was dismayed when the image appeared with *getting a grip* across it - along with other purple prose like *‘their silence screamed into the night air’* (!). The careful input my friend and I had given her was hardly touched on. For my friend’s pains, only her name and illness were included. Our bit was crammed into a hair-raising article already written about a woman very severely affected by Manic Depression. We had hoped to offer a more manageable picture. My words were quoted in the middle of that text, *‘says Bruce Saunders’* It was my first experience with ‘the Press’. I was really unhappy and leaned heavily on Cindy to make amends. She did respond some, but too little, too late.

It wasn’t until the art show at Schizophrenia ‘94 that I had the incentive to put the words and image together as I envisioned them in my (hypo-manic) creative mind that night. My friend, Maggie Thompson, did the calligraphy and Cindy sold me a nice 11x14. I got it matted and framed and showed it. It was a great incentive to know there was a chance to exhibit.

This version is from my attempt to make the piece into a poster that could be easily copied so that it would reach a greater audience and hopefully to affect peoples’ ideas about mental illness. The original photo was scanned into a computer along with the words again hand-written in Maggie’s beautiful hand, then lino output printed. This is the photo copy end product two years after the original inspiration.



Oct 1995

