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Then, off to Buffalo to graduate school and Round 2, Marriage 1. Of course, there was a maze of convoluted circumstances: a Ph.D comprehensive to write, landing in the nuthouse for 3 days, the black shrink who spent 3 minutes a day with me while I strained in the misty void of depression to count backwards from 100 by sevens.

A quick graph of the infinitude of details. You can jump in anywhere. The swirl downward continued. The separation, the solace of family, empty platitudes, you'll get over it, time heals all wounds, etc., etc. You begin to feel ashamed of not confirming the cliches.

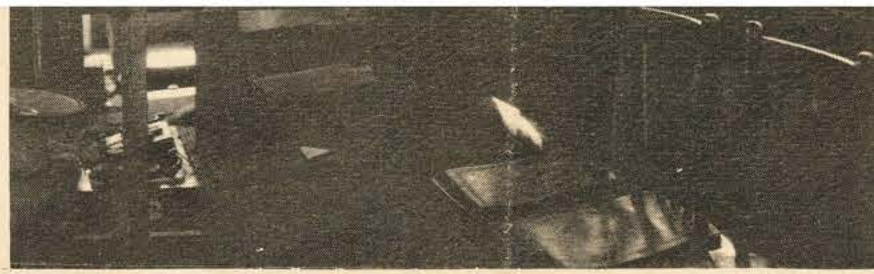
Back to UBC, more comprehensives, banging my head against the career wall, another marriage, softer, less painful, lost somehow in dreams. The doctoral research, meaningless crap on the generation gap, for which they had little but misguided praise, leads to breakdown, breakdown and again into the hospital. And then the second separation. There are no laws here. One

MENTAL PATIENTS ASSOCIATION

Origin, developments, and principles

separation produces a breakdown; one breakdown produces a separation.

As in your life, it happens day by day over years, not easily. How tortuous the path to that simple decision: fuck the Ph.D. Well, fuck it. I have seen too much in hospitals with these people called patients. I've seen the rubble of their lives and shown them mine. I've known 3 people who've killed themselves over the past 6 months. Real people, now dead. I've seen the condescension among professionals, the way this culture leaves you nowhere to turn, the way it turns away from people in real need, spends \$3 per person per year on military research and 10 cents on mental health research. You know who you get to talk to in mental hospitals? Student nurses — 20 year old psychological virgins with bleached hair who know nothin' about nothin'.



But, you also get to talk to other patients, and it's out of that talk that the Mental Patients Association originated.

And come to a time-worn principle: When you get nowhere else to turn, you turn to yourselves. It's easier to do now than 10 years ago. There are models now: blacks and women and students and homosexuals. There's a group in New York called the Insane Liberation Front.

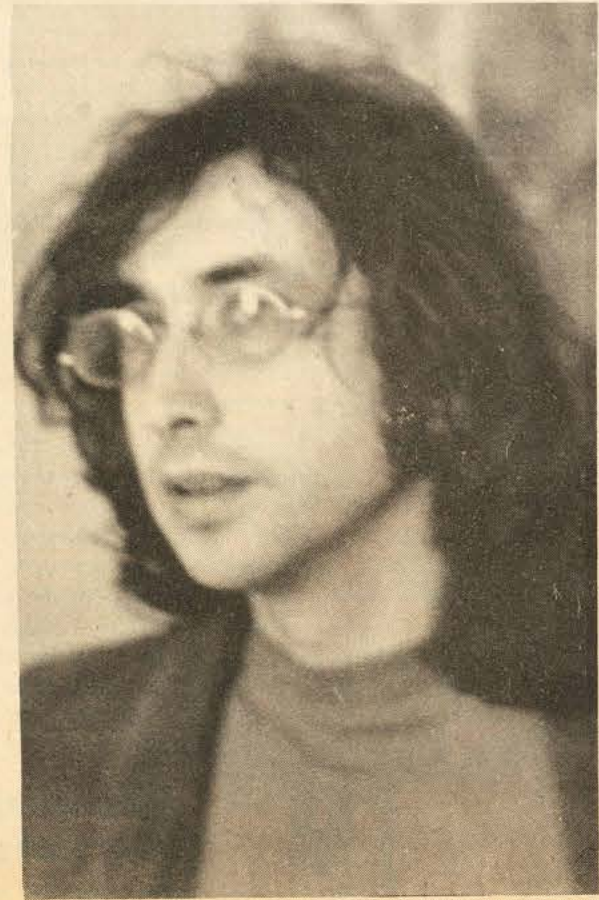
I want the MPA to be part of the movement. But there's a whole gamut of attitudes among the members. The principles we do agree on are: the group is to be run by non-professionals; to be run democratically. We oppose the false, destructive stereotype of the "mentally ill" as ... well, you know the stereotype. The group is open to anyone — patients, former patients and prospective patients (that's everyone). We don't accept the ordinary assumption that the problems in our lives are unilaterally our own.

Other liberation groups like women's lib and gay lib often don't know where to begin fighting their oppression. What is there actually to be done? We have that problem to a much lesser extent. People kill themselves in this city every week. The suicide rate in B.C. has risen 35% in the past decade according to B.C. Gov't. statistics. People feel the stigma against being crazy and hide out, adding pressure to pressure.

sort of a catalyst, we talked to people, and had them come over and drink wine at our house and got them talking to each other. And out of that grew a vital kind of community that's creating Rainbow City.

Why does someone want to get involved in a Window project?

I can't answer general questions about someone; I was at a space in my life where I wanted to do something exciting, I wanted to produce something visible and where I felt that my energies were being directed in the direction of talking to people and being involved in the community for a while, and the Bus and Window seemed to be an ideal place to do that trip. So I did.



We've rented a house to be our drop-in and emergency centre. It's open 24 hours a day. We have 12 beds for people freaking out to stay for short periods of time. We have a car to pick people up and bring them here. We want the house to be a community, run by the people who use it. We'll have therapy groups here and discussion groups about issues relevant to people's lives and food to eat and, hopefully an alternative to the cycle of home and hospital that most patients find themselves caught up in. (2 out of 3 admissions to Riverview are re-admissions! Again, according to good-life government dept. of statistics).

To this point (April 14) we've almost completed furnishing and decorating our Centre. Most of our energy so far has gone into this activity, although lots of people are using the house as a place to be. There are about 15 people upstairs now, the Stones are playing and it feels good. Next step is a training program for people who want to talk with people who are freaking out. We're not yet ready to have people living here, but hope to be ready within a few weeks.

Right now, we need help and money and people with energy to give to those who have less. Drop by sometime. We're at 3191 West 10th (handily adjacent to the liquor store on Broadway). Phone is 738-1422.

Lanny Beckman

Mental Patients Association

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