

Darwin Ness

Excerpts from Remembering the Soul of our Work Options for Community Living - 1992

edited by John O'Brien & Connie Lyle O'Brien

Some achievements depend on many peoples' efforts and draw them together for the warmth and pleasure of shared food and celebration.

Housewarming (page 24)

As I rang the doorbell, the sounds of mingled voices and laughter drifted into the hallway. I was greeted at the door by Glen, his checked flannel shirt covered by a bright green Delitalia Chefs apron. "Come on in," he said. His face was flushed with excitement. "I made a big pot of chili. You've got to try some!"

It was Glen and Darwin's housewarming party- a long awaited event, celebrating their move to the Reservoir Co-op. The house was filled with faces that were both familiar and new to me. It was a true celebration - food, flowers, gifts and friends welcoming them into their new home. Darwin was in the kitchen concentrating his energies on a bowl of Glen's chili. I recognized some of the guests as Darwin's co-workers at the State Office Building. I saw Donna, Glen's girl friend who was making her debut that day at the house, on the couch, mascara brush and compact mirror in hand, putting on the finishing touches to her face. Some of the less familiar faces belonged to Glen and Darwin's new neighbors. A mom with a toddler had moved in a few buildings down and Betty, the grandmother with the beehive hairdo that I had interviewed on the selection committee. Glen was apparently in charge of the house tour. I watched him showing one guest after another every corner of the place. When his aunt Gladys and cousin arrived, he looked like he would burst with pride.

There was such an air of excitement. The house was beautiful, spacious and warm - a place that emerged from a vision of what a home should be and feel like. At one point, conversation quieted as another guest arrived. It was Tim Cullen, Secretary of Health and Social Services, making a rather grand entrance in his black wool topcoat. I think a lot of us were a little uncomfortable in his presence - except for Darwin, that is. To him, he was just another buddy from work talking football scores.

My thought wandered back to those early meetings almost two years ago when the reservoir was just an idea and to the first time I heard Susie Hobart share her vision of an intergenerational community of people who were young, older and disabled. A place that would welcome families and children, minorities, people who were financially well off as well as those who weren't, the idea of creating a neighborhood in the spirit of cooperation and empowerment. She talked about the way in which design of the buildings could encourage community by having common spaces, porches, yards and gardens and a playground. I thought about the time, energy and commitment it takes to make a vision into a reality. The endless Planning Commission and City Council hearings, meetings to hammer out every detail. I remembered the ground breaking ceremony in an empty lot with a huge gaping hole and walking through skeletons of buildings, trying to imagine them as homes.

From the first minute I heard about the Reservoir, I knew it would be a perfect place for Darwin and Glen to live. And there at the party with ~~Glen and Darwin~~ finally a reality, I wondered whether Darwin, back in his crib at [the institution], ever could have envisioned his life today. Though none of us talked about it, I think many of us who know Darwin and his story couldn't help but think that night, about his long journey home.

A Day at the Brewers (page 34)

Stopped to buy food and a new hat for Darwin in order to save time and discussed the fact that one end of the stadium might be better than the other since it would be closer to the car.

We walked for what seemed a mile, at least from looking at Eric, and even stopped once to ask directions to make sure we were still on track. When finally we saw the escalator, it looked tricky, but we decided if one of us held the food the other could take Darwin up and come back to help after finding seats. Just as we were about to proceed with our plan a security guard called out,

"What are ya doing?" We quickly told him we were going up, when he said he thought we shouldn't. We tried to explain that we really didn't think it was a problem, but he was quicker in telling us it was. He then explained we'd need to go back a short distance to the elevator.

So, off once again, we headed out in search of the elevator. Finally after having walked almost all the way around the stadium we spotted it - a line of approximately 20 people waiting to go up to a game that started in less than five minutes.

Finally, our turn came and we stepped off the elevator in time to hear the end of the Star Spangled Banner and to see a sea of people in wheelchairs grouped around the back rows. What was worse was the fact that a good share of these people were wearing lovely yellow cut-outs shaped like apples, that sported the name of their nursing home.

Finally, feeling defeated and drained, we sat down to watch the game. We watched in dismay as inning after inning there was no score. In the 11th inning we even went so far as to suggest we go, if there was no score by the 12th inning. This, however, did not go over well with our companions for the day.

By the 13th inning Kathryn and I were desperate for someone to score. We didn't care who, as long as we could go home. Suddenly, Kansas City scored and Kathryn cheered. The inning went on with Kansas City winning 4 to 0.

We made our way slowly to the front of the line at the elevator, only to be told we'd have to wait for the next ride, because we weren't part of the group. In a last desperate attempt to have her way at least once that day, Kathryn quickly said, "We are part of your group," and crowded us on.

So while it was a long and frustrating day, everyone seemed to get out of it what they wanted. Darwin got to root for his favorite team, Eric got to eat junk food all day without being nagged, Kathryn learned how the game of baseball is actually played and I got a little closer to knowing who Eric and Darwin really are.

Aug. 1988 Missy Fizzell

Even when people have worked together to make unbelievable changes and achieved a strong relationship, a person's dream may remain a mystery. It's important to remember and respect what is unknown about another person.

Some Unanswered Questions page 57

Darwin and I rode the Metro Plus bus together last Tuesday to see a video tape at the technical college. Watching Darwin from across the bus, I wonder and I try to imagine what he's dreaming of. His face shows little emotion just now. How does Darwin pick his dreams? What's on his current list? How can he tell us? What is the "stuff that dreams are made of"? Dreams are sometimes things that we have little control over -they just seem to happen. Others, we work and strive to get, sometimes without success.

Darwin has been very successful at having his dreams become reality. And he's had some incredible dreams ...

... to live in his own home, not a large institution; to eat what he wants for lunch, not what's been prepared for 100; to drink when he wants, not at staff's convenience; to have a paying job at the state, not sit alone and wad up newspapers; to go to the denomination of church he wants, not the only one that's provided; to get his hair cut when he wants to-not just when the barber is scheduled for his ward; to get a new wheelchair -or at least live someplace where they'd let him use the one he had; to go camping; to ride a horse; to go skiing; to fly in an airplane; to be on the TV screen, instead of just watching it ...

Yes, Darwin has had some incredible dreams ...

Darwin was one of the people filmed on the televised video we went to see. It was also shown at other sites across the country. It was an exciting event for those who know Darwin. As the film began, Darwin was very quiet. I heard some noise that sounded like laughter, so I turned around to smile at Darwin. But he was crying. What was he feeling? Was it happiness ... pride ... disbelief? Why wasn't he smiling and laughing?

Darwin doesn't have the words to tell us how he feels. And he can't tell us his latest dreams. Our communication is limited to Darwin pointing to baseball, swimming, or bowling --concrete pictures on his board that we can understand. Dreams and emotions aren't such tangible things.

So why was Darwin crying? Perhaps it was just the realization that, yet another incredible dream had come true.

Feb. 1988 Alice Sosinsky

Friends

Friends offer companionship, support, assistance, and a sense of belonging to a wider community. Typical human service practices reinforce common prejudices and diminish severely disabled people's chances of making and keeping friends. Segregated away from the ordinary patterns of community life, congregated and transferred from place to place for staff convenience, and treated as if their relationships do not matter and their sexuality menaces society, many people with severe disabilities experience isolation and loneliness. This important fact of peoples' lives calls on Options' staff to learn how to respond actively and sensitively.

Time and Love and Work

A lot has been said and written about friends, and I think it's true that you can never have too many of them. Sometimes friendships become more like family and it makes us change our definition of what "family" means. In the last few weeks I've heard stories and attended gatherings which have overflowed with the warmth and color of real friendships.

Darwin, Glen, and Randy threw their annual October party to commemorate... let's see... Well, I guess it's the anniversary of Darwin moving out of the institution four years ago, moving into the Reservoir Co-op two years ago, and four years of the three of them being together. Not only do the relationships among Darwin, Glen, Randy, and the other support workers go beyond working relationships, but all the co-workers, neighbors, co-op members, friends, and friends of friends made for a true house warming. The house was buzzing when I got there and I even missed the peak of the crowd. I wonder if Darwin, who was clearly enjoying the celebration, ever imagined when he was at [the institution] hosting anything like this some day.

A few days later I went to another festive housewarming at Chris and Tim's. Again, a full house. Chris looked better than I've ever seen him, and their cozy home welcomed all. Don mingled with everyone, telling jokes. Most everyone there were strangers to me, but it was obvious they were friends of Chris and Tim.

More evidence of friendships happened over Thanksgiving weekend, when Jean accompanied Beth and Aletha to Beth's family's home near Sheboygan. Beth was once Jean's live-in attendant, and Aletha currently is. It is unusual that former workers stay in touch with people they supported. With Jean, not only has that happened, but Beth and Aletha are good friends too. I wasn't there, but I bet at *that* family gathering Jean and Aletha were considered family.

Last but not least, there's Christine. She is someone whose list of friends is heavy with social worker types, which should be no surprise considering the surroundings in which she's lived. A few months ago I began to hear mention of Dan and Theresa. Chris told me they lived across the street from her. Once she said they told her that if she ever had a problem or needed a place to stay, she was always welcome at their house.

They came to her birthday party at the Nitty Gritty with a nice gift, and Theresa came to court to support Chris about an incident involving Chris's upstairs neighbor. Theresa has advocated for Chris throughout this period. In a nutshell, Theresa and Dan are neighborly, friendly, and supportive. To them Chris is a neighbor. From across the street, they found each other with no help from anyone else.

Jean and Chris and Darwin and Glen and Christine have had varying opportunities to form real friendships. It hasn't always come easily. Those relationships don't come about through the efforts of us service providers. At least not very often. Real friendships happen naturally, and they grow when time and love and work are put into them.

December 1989

—Peter Bazur-Leidy

Why I Continue to Do this work -Part II

Behind the walls of concrete and bricks lives waste away.

Ken lived behind walls 25 years, Darwin 40, Terry 44, Bruce 38.

Many more have lived there longer, many have died there.

I know people who've been beat, left in bed, raped, arms broken, drugged, locked up, tied up, left naked in urine on the floor.

No one I know has ever asked to go back.

A place where they let Bruce's teeth rot.

A place where Ken could never talk.

A place where Darwin could never work.

Places under the monitoring of a Division called CARE AND TREATMENT.

PRISONER: a person confined or kept in custody.

INSTITUTION: a place of confinement, as a mental hospital

Hundreds of people in Wisconsin locked up behind the walls.

One by one people will leave.

One reason I continue this work is to see that more people can move out.

To go home, to meet others, to work, to have fun, to begin a new life that had been taken, been confined.

November 1990

—Sid Nichols

Questions that require drawing a balance between conflicting values are particularly difficult when a person relies completely on a third party for the decision.

Us and Them

In the face of a recent respite worker crisis (i.e., another one bites the dust), I've been finding my thoughts often on Darwin and his need for in-home support. This story will concentrate on Darwin's regular, permanent, weekend and live-in workers (Randy and Jim) who also happen to be the two most important people in Darwin's life.

It's often too easy to get caught up in the problems and hassles that support people cause, rather than remember their importance and value in Darwin's life. Why do I nearly experience a stroke every time I accompany Darwin and Randy to the U.W. Rehab and have to see every piece of food and garbage on Darwin's chair from the last six months? Why are those dead leaves still piled in the corner of the living room? The plant above it hasn't seen a green leaf or sign of life for the past three months. Why is Darwin wearing a sweater that's ripped up to the elbow? What! You want a vacation? Why is a temporary fill-in worker asking for temporary fill-in? Why hasn't somebody emptied that dirty chux pail? Why is there coffee splattered over every inch of those brand new white cupboards?

But, on the other hand, why can't I consider that in every crisis situation, both Randy and Jim have been there. They've always rallied to Darwin's aid. Rather than the filthy wheelchair, why can't I reflect on the Wilderness Inquiry 2 director's statement that Randy was the best attendant they've ever had on one of their trips? (No small statement, I'm sure.) Why can't I remember Jim saying, "Gee, I really don't like the thought of working on Christmas, but the thought of Darwin with strangers on the holiday is even worse"? Why can't I appreciate it when they take the extra 45 minutes in meal preparation to allow Darwin to help clean the veggies? Why can't I understand the stress and burn out that comes from working eight days in a row?

I need to focus my attention on the loving and caring relationships that these two men foster in Darwin's life. They are his friends, his family. Don't I hear the way that Randy affectionately refers to Darwin as "Dar" and rests a gentle hand on his shoulder? And rather than getting annoyed at Darwin for pointing to Randy's picture sixteen times in five minutes, why can't I realize that Darwin really misses Randy when he's away on vacation. And why don't I recognize that smile that only Darwin can produce when Jim bounds through the door - ready to match wits with his weekend companion. And how can I resent Jim's questioning of how Darwin's money gets spent, when he's only advocating for further choice and autonomy issues?

All of these questions bring back John O'Brien's advice to our agency a few years back. He challenged us to break down those feelings of us and them. "Them" being in-home support staff. "Us" being the Options employees. We need to value "them", include "them", appreciate "them", and break down the barriers that separate the "us" from the "them". The folks in the "them" category are a hell of a lot more important to Darwin than those in the "us" category. We cannot ignore "them" or take "them" for granted. How many of "us" would be willing, for \$4/hour (sleep time not included) to cook, clean, bathe, dress, grocery shop, shave, do laundry, brush teeth, plan activities, maintain equipment, wash dishes, cut toenails, make the bed, scrub out shitty underwear, and schedule the bus - and still find the time and energy to build relationships filled with affection and humor? The Jim's and the Randy's of the world may not be model employees in some ways, but for Darwin they're the best.

March 1989

-Alice Sosinsky

On Words of Power

In the fall of 1988, several Options staff members attended a conference about community building which included a discussion of "words of power." Words of power symbolize vital sources of meaning for a person. These symbols energize a person and organize the person's actions. At their suggestion, Options staff identified and wrote about their own words of power.

Liberation

Liberation is a theme that has been present in my life since my earliest memories. As a small child, I heard my parents, both survivors of the holocaust, tell stories of liberation from the death camps in Germany and Poland. The images created by their memories have shaped who I am as a person and have influenced my work in ways I've only begun to understand in recent years.

Four years ago Options became part of a new effort to bring people directly from state institutions to their home communities. This experience helped me to understand how our work was part of another liberation movement. I even remember the moment that this connection was made for me. It was a welcome home party for Darwin, a fifty-five-year-old man, on the day of his arrival in his new home after 47 years in a state institution. As I entered his apartment I saw the flowers and gifts, the kitchen table filled with food. There was laughter and a sense of excitement among the small group of people who gathered to celebrate this truly amazing occasion. I then saw Darwin for the first time: I'll never forget that picture of Darwin in his wheelchair, laughing, arms waving, blue eyes flashing. On his tray in front of him was a huge bowl of home-made broccoli soup, a brownie and a can of Budweiser. Though we were all strangers to him and though he couldn't tell us in words what he was feeling, we all knew that Darwin knew he had come home.

I understood then about the similarities between my parents' story and the stories of people who are labelled who have been locked away, deprived of their dignity and their very humanity. I realized in a very deep and personal way how closely my history and Darwin's were bound together.

As time goes on, I am learning that liberation is something that goes far beyond the actual freeing of someone from an institution. That is perhaps the most dramatic act. But it is also just the beginning of a long and mysterious process. There is also an internal letting go that happens over time, sometimes after many years, in which there is an experience of personal healing and transformation which can seem miraculous.

I don't understand the process, but I have seen incredible changes in people over the past fourteen years. I am reminded of Ken, a man 43 years old who lived 25 years in an institution and who, for most of the past four years spoke few words and showed little emotion. Then suddenly, in the past two months, he has begun to talk. He talks with animation and excitement. He asks questions. He talks about his day, about what he likes and doesn't like. He tells you what he wants. What un-locked the door? Why did it happen now? What changed in his life?

The process is magical to me: a setting free of the human spirit, if you will. I think it has to do with trust and feeling safe. It's about having space to try and fail, to have choices and control and it's about being treated with dignity and having continuity and security and being cared for. The liberation story is a humble one. It's about the everydayness of being with people over time. For the workers at Options, we offer that continuity and security through often routine tasks that guide people through the complexities of community life.

I think what we can do for people is to help create that space for the flowering to happen. We can nurture that seed, feed it, give it space and hopefully in its own season it will blossom.

Approaching our work as part of a liberation movement helps us to move from a place of "power over" the people we support to one of "power with". It restores a sense of dignity and a spirit of passion to staff whose work is often

as devalued by society as the labelled people with whom we work. It has also helped. us to question the ways in which we work together and how we organize ourselves.

I'm learning that this process of liberation is not something we as professionals are doing for people with disabilities. Most of us carry some form of oppression within us as a result of our personal histories and the political and cultural context in which we live. The lessons I learn professionally are really lessons in life. My own liberation story is very much interwoven with the stories of the people for whom we work. We are on the journey together.

Dec. 1988 Gail Jacob.. Page 133

Revolution

From the Latin *revolutus*- to revolve

When I first heard people here talk about words of power, revolution flashed on the screen in my brain. I thought about why this word would hold power for me. Revolution. It sounds strong. It made me think about acts of rebellion, overthrow, dramatic change, a seizing of power.

It wasn't too difficult to tie this to my work here at Options and even before I came to Options. Much of what I learned, of what interested me in school, was not the technical aspects of teaching. I frankly found the lesson plans, the indirect physical prompts versus direct verbal cues, the futility of teaching kids who lived in [the institution] to be somewhat frustrating and tedious.

What I found myself thinking about was the revolution in which I was enmeshed. A parental revolution had brought about the legislation that got these kids into school in the first place. The people at the University were revolutionizing how to think about teaching, about special ed and about people with severe disabilities. They espoused regular paying jobs instead of sheltered work-shops. They preached keeping kids with families instead of sending them to institutions. They wanted these children to be able to eat at McDonald's like the rest of their peers and they daringly insisted that teaching people how to order a Big Mac was relevant curriculum.

As my experiences in this revolution increased I felt myself moving away from my focus as a teacher and thinking more about the possibilities in lives of people with disabilities. I began to see that skills alone were not what we wanted to achieve here. Everyday I saw kids learning, achieving, growing. But I saw them do it in segregated classrooms. I saw them surrounded by teachers, aides, and job coaches, not other students or co-workers. No matter what skills they were taught they were still separate.

Somehow I ended up here at Options. When I came here I was still pretty enmeshed in my teacher/trainer frame of mind. I knew something wasn't quite working right in what I was trying to do but it wasn't at all dear to me what it was. Over the past five years I think I have gotten closer to helping people realize some of the possibilities that I first began thinking of years ago.

There has been a lot of personal growth involved in making that happen. I have received a lot of help from co-workers, the people we support and the pool of revolutionaries with which we associ-ate. I have learned to give up much of my need to control situations and people. I've learned that people usually know what is best for themselves. I have learned to listen. I have learned a lot more things but that's not what this story is about. It is about revolution.

Revolution: activity or movement designed to effect fundamental change in the social structure.

Are we directing a revolution? No, I don't think so. Are Darwin, Chris, Rita, and Terry directing a revolution? I would say they are. Their very lives day to day are living a revolution. It is a slow change, one that will continue for an indefinite amount of time. Some of us are trying to imagine what this revolution might look like when it's over, but I don't think we really know. That, too, is because it's not our revolution, but theirs. People with disabilities are effecting change in their own lives. They are taking risks, making choices, accumulating power. Me? I see my job as helping them to continue to do that. My job is to support the revolution.

Finally, when I sat down to write this story and said the word revolution to myself another meaning occurred to me. I thought of revolution as a form of the word revolve, to turn around a center.

As I continue on the orbit around the center of my work, my thoughts about what that work is continuing to change. But it seems that I stay on the path and that I am held in this position by a kind of gravity. I would like to come back to this story five years from now to compare where I am now in my revolution to where I will be then.

Sept. 1989 Amy Lutzke

Faded Photographs

Until three weeks ago, my 94-year-old grandfather and 89-year-old grandmother had managed to stay in their own home, despite blindness, crippling arthritis and other health problems related to their advancing ages. They stubbornly refused to make significant changes in their lifestyle until the crisis our family had feared finally occurred: my grandfather fell during the night and broke his hip. Literally overnight their lives were transformed. My grandfather was taken to the hospital where he underwent hip replacement surgery. Though his body was repaired, his sharp wit and quick humor were lost to confusion and despair. My grandmother was taken to a nursing home where, alone, she was forced to face the loss of autonomy and control many older people fear.

This past weekend their four sons along with their wives and a few grandchildren tackled the difficult and painful task of deciding what to do with the possessions these two people had accumulated throughout the sixty-eight years of their marriage. My grandparents were not wealthy people. Most of their lives were spent on a small farm in southern Minnesota. The only place for many of their things was the dumpster parked in the driveway. Many others were marked and set aside for an upcoming garage sale. The pieces of antique furniture and china of value were divided among the four families according to my grandmother's wishes.

Sorting through their things did occasionally unearth a treasure of inestimable value, however: the drawer that contained my grandmother's wedding veil, shoes and silk ring bearer's pillow, the trunk that revealed baby clothes and shoes worn by my father and his brothers, the box holding strands of hair from my grandmother's first haircut and the rusted bucket in the basement that held metal cars

and trucks, toys the four boys had shared. The day was almost over though, we were gearing up to leave when we found the greatest treasure of all. Several boxes of old photographs, keeping the vacuum cleaner company in the coat closet. Moments of a family's history frozen in time.

A picture is worth a thousand words. The power of this statement was quickly realized as we all

gathered around the boxes, alternately shouting with delight and laughing hysterically as the pictures were pulled out one-by-one and passed around. There was my grandmother as a child of three with her brother and again, as a young bride. My grandfather, young and handsome graduating from high school. My father and his brothers as babies and young men. Myself as a chubby nine-month-old. It was the perfect end to a long, difficult day. We prepared to depart, many of us in different directions feeling happy and complete somehow. The pictures had brought us together and given a sense of meaning to the painful decisions we had made that day. We were a family.

As I tossed in bed that night and reviewed the day's events, my thoughts often turned to those pictures. Now that I'm soon to become a mother I often think about my own child to be and how I will create a sense of family and belonging for her or him. Those pictures seem to be an important part of that. I also thought about people I know who have lost their history, who have no pictures or even people to tie them to the past and to their own creation. I recently had a conversation with Ann in which she explained that she has been helping Carol to remember and record her personal history. A history punctuated with institutionalization and loss of control. A history devoid of family and memories captured on film. Carol has no pictures of herself as a child or of her mother as a young woman. Ann explained that she was planning to investigate what happened to Carol's mother. As Carol's friend, Ann was trying to replace a piece of the history that she had lost.

I also thought about Darwin and the power that a single picture held for him. He, too, has experienced a life of institutionalization, separated from his family. Unlike Carol, however, Darwin has memories of his mother and knows that she is dead. He sometimes crosses his hand over his throat and points upward to indicate that he's thinking about her. A couple of years ago Alice gave Darwin one of the nicest gifts he has ever received. She tracked down a cousin of Darwin's who cared enough about Darwin's need to connect with his past to locate a picture of his mother for him. Darwin was thrilled to be presented with this treasure and insisted that her picture be immediately cut to size and pasted on his communication board! Darwin finally had a precious faded photograph, and he couldn't wait to share it with the world.

Feb. 1991 Julie Nichols-Younes page 140

Memories Fade ...

My stories ... arc the windows on the house in which I live. yet I seem to be able to see through only one window at any time. Although I may erroneously think that what I see is all there is, I can actually see only a small part of what is in the house. If I look through another window, I see something entirely different. •

-A. R. Beisser. A Gr11afij PIISllge - Notes on the Freedom to ur,e 01' Die

All of the stories are powerful to me. When I hear them read, I hear about a part of our work and lives that I would otherwise not have much access to. Reading stories to people outside of Options is also very powerful - the stories seem to touch people in a way that hours of talking about what Options is about can't. I like to re-read stories when I'm struggling with my work. I sit in the library and page through the book. Sometimes I read bits of lots of stories. Sometimes I read all of the stories written by one person.

As I remember it, we started writing the stories because we wanted to be better able to tell the stories of the people we supported. Not the official history contained in green files, but the real story about who a person is. Noam Chomsky said, "Memories fade, and only official history remains." The stories are a challenge to that. They are a way of recording a moment of truth that would not usually find its way into official history. The stories become the unofficial, unauthorized, unabridged version of small moments in our collective experience. They will remain when our memories fade.

Without the stories, would I remember Darwin's tears when seeing himself on 1V, the birth of MO's nephew, the experience a student had with Roger, Diane's opinions on clinic waiting rooms, Sid's clever analogies, and all of the joys and fears of the last four years? Not with my memory. And who wants to have only "official history" to remember? Not me.

I never let writing stories be an ordeal .. I only write them when the pen keeps moving on the paper. When it stops, I stop. The quality of the words written is not my concern. I write what is on my mind and have some desire to think through. Other people talk of their struggle to get their pen to move. Aren't individual differences wonderful?

This leads me to a final thought. I would guess that we have probably written around 400 stories. I have experienced the whole range of emotions in hearing them read - tears, tension almost too strong to bear, laughter that made me ache, fellowship, fear and wonder at the world. I have felt angry and offended by both the experiences described, and by the message of the writer. But I have never heard a story which wasn't compelling and important in some way.

The stories will not write themselves, but they need to be written. Without them, our shared experience is less rich.

*Without such story windows, I could not see much meaning in my house at all, so I am very grateful for them.,, -
AR. Beisser, A GrillCefu/ PISSlgt*

July 1991 Kim Turner page 149