A Strenuous Business: The Achievement of Helen Candland Stark

Lavina Fielding Anderson

"The evolution of the soul is strenuous business."
— Helen Candland Stark
Christmas letter, 1959

INTRODUCTION

HELEN CANDLAND STARK, born of hardy pioneer Utah stock, was a thriving transplant in Delaware for most of her adult life with her husband, Henry Stark, a research chemist. Adoptive parents of three, they nurtured the Delaware Branch from its ecclesiastical preexistence until it became the Delaware Stake in 1974, only five years after they moved back to Utah. Many-roled, Helen has been teacher, actress, wife, mother, writer, environmentalist, and feminist, all interpreted in her own distinctive style. Now, almost eighty-nine and widowed by Henry's death in 1988, she is a survivor of resilient spirit. In 1989, a DIALOGUE team of interviewers, Shirley Paxman and Belle Cluff, using questions composed by Ann Fletcher, conducted an oral history session which Helen herself edited and supplemented with the assistance of Wanda Scott, who transcribed tapes and typed many earlier drafts.

Helen's papers will be deposited in the archives of the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Her candid and witty essay, "The Good Woman Syndrome: Or, When Is Enough, Enough?" was first published in *Exponent II* 3, no. 2 (Dec. 1976): 16, and is reprinted here by permission.

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A VISION OF A CRYSTAL

At age fifty-six, Helen was diagnosed as having a congenital heart defect, a coarctation of the aorta. Hourglass shaped, it channeled most of the blood into her head and chest under such pressure that her ribs were eroding and she was having retinal hemorrhages. There was a chance surgery could correct it. There was also a good chance that the operation would kill her. She was, at that time, the oldest known person in the United States to undergo such an operation. In making the decision, she says, "I accepted both the risk and the promise. I was not afraid. And yet, the doctor held my heart in his hand." As she came out of the anesthetic, she had an extraordinary experience: "Somebody called my name. In order to answer the call, I had to pass through a field of swords and spears. I don't have a memory of doing that, but I came back with a perception about crystals. The crystal is the central core of an individual. A crystal may be smashed and broken, as by a neurosis, or it may voluntarily yield and melt. If it is smashed and broken, it can be remade by one's archangel, but only into a simpler crystal. But if it loses its identity by yielding and becoming one with the universe, then it can be made into a more complex crystal."

Holding this vision of the reshaped life in her reshaped circulatory system, Helen laughs wryly, "I think I have tried to struggle toward wholeness, but mostly I was trying to get the corn canned or the beds made or the lesson prepared."

EARLY YEARS

Work was the heritage young Helen Candland was heir to. The oldest child of nine, born in 1901, she was much loved. One of her "myths" is her own five-year-old memory of her father, Arthur Charles Candland, holding her hand and skipping with her around the kitchen where the coal range was glowing and the teakettle was simmering. Helen was the only child in kindergarten who did not know how to skip, and her father was working with her "so that I could go to class that morning, a skipper."

Additional memories bear with them some ambiguity. She remembers standing on a stool in her mother's bedroom just after the birth of her brother Harold. "I'm going to fall! I'm going to fall!" eighteen-month-old Helen cried. From the bed, her mother replied, "Then you'll just have to fall."

"I learned," said Helen, "that I'd better look after myself."

The third memory is of accompanying her mother around town with Harold in the baby carriage and listening to the outspoken admi-

ration of passersby for his great brown eyes and thick curls. And then the speaker would add, "And is this your little girl, too?" From this, toddler Helen concluded, "Boys are intrinsically better than girls."

And a darker memory emerged from her kindergarten year at Mt. Pleasant. The Candlands' quarter-block lot lay under a deep blanket of snow, accented by an angling ridge left by a tunneling weasel. Suddenly, a cry went up in the neighborhood: "A weasel! It will eat the chickens." Men gathered eagerly, guns in hand. Helen remembers, "They no longer looked like the good and kind men I knew from church. Their faces were stern, their eyes mean. Even as a child, I felt that change—how good and loving men change when they unite to destroy."

Helen's father, one of the sons of polygamist David Candland, grew up and married in Sanpete County. It was a love match; and although their family was never financially secure, Helen remembers the tenderness of her parents' relationship. Over the dinner table, her father would exclaim, "Isn't your mother beautiful? Just look at her, children." Her mother would go out to the mountains with him to check on the sheep and return "with an arm full of bluebells and her eyes shining."

Lydia Hasler Candland's thirst for education ran deep. When Helen was seven, the family moved from Mt. Pleasant to Provo, a few blocks from BYU. Helen recalls the next several years as "an Eden time." Her mother managed to attend classes in Tennyson, Browning, or Jewish history. The children were enrolled in BYU Training School, returning to the Mt. Pleasant farm in the summers. Lyceums brought Martha Graham, Robert Frost, and Helen Keller across their stage. College Hall overflowed as "students from the boondocks" absorbed the world's classic dramas and appraised sophisticated debates on current topics. "I began to feel the world opening up," Helen recalls. "At BYU, I belonged." In classes with T. Earl Pardoe and Katherine Pardoe, she memorized "quantities" of poetry, whose cadences are still familiar on her tongue.

She recalls feeling "a little embarrassed" when President Heber J. Grant visited the students, generously passing out armfuls of the poetic works of Edgar A. Guest. "I was into Joyce Kilmer's 'Trees,' which I considered to be a step above 'It takes a heap o' livin,' " she laughs. "I now realize how small that step was."

Her mother's nine pregnancies became successively difficult. Helen was in complete charge of the two-year-old after her mother's eighth pregnancy and again had a great deal of family responsibility during the ninth pregnancy. When Helen was assigned to wash out the

diapers and protested, her mother, for the only time she could remember, "spoke sharply to me."

The work was unrelenting. One day, her task was to make a whole bolt of outing flannel into winter pajamas for her brothers. By the day's end, "I was so tired that I started to weep. Mother took me for a walk on our dusty ranch road. She held my arm as we walked along; but what she was communicating to me without words was, 'This is the way it is, Helen. This is the way it is.' You rounded up your shoulders and coped as well as you could."

Helen wrote a sonnet as preface for an album of photographs, a family Christmas present one year:

> How she loved life who gave life in such measure:
> Greens from her garden; shining row on row
> Of prisoned plums and pears, a glass-sealed treasure.
> No money in the bank? Then mend and sew.
> Let resolution cut the coat or find
> The fee that sends us paid again to school.
> Tired? Bluebells against a whitewashed wall are kind.
> Sleep gently, she has turned the music stool.
>
> Now this the ripened grain, the garnered sheaf,
> The harvesting she could not stay to reap
> Is gathered here. Turn us leaf by leaf,
> Nine sons and daughters. Mother, in the deep
> Everlasting where His spirits dwell,
> See us today and find you planted well.

She remembers a time of terror on the ranch during a flood in 1918. Her father was away, her mother six months pregnant with her last child. As the flood waters roared down, Helen and her mother, dragging the younger children, ran ahead of the flood to a high spot about half an acre wide. Above them wobbled a dam, barely holding back the waters, now on all sides. They watched the water sweep away horses, cattle, machinery, and outbuildings. The father of another family, trapped on the same spot, volunteered to cross the raging channel on a pole torn from the fence and go for help. He struggled across, then turned to wave that he was safe. At that moment, the dam broke; and the mud-thickened water swept him past them downstream to death.

The ranch home was uninhabitable, filled with mud. The orchard died, and the family moved into a rat-infested cabin. "My six-month-

pregnant mother made a home for us in that dismal setting," marveled Helen.

Another disaster occurred a little later when a careless farmhand, trying to destroy a wasp nest, left a torch smoldering in the barn. The fire destroyed the barn, killing a whole herd of pregnant ewes.

In sixth grade, Helen caught scarlet fever and spent the quarantine period alone in the parlor, separated from the rest of the house by a creosoted sheet hung across the folding doors. She swabbed her own throat with iodine until it was scarred white. Her food was handed in through the window on a tray. When it was absolutely necessary that her mother enter, she dressed in a long duster, a dust cap, boots, and rubber gloves that reeked of formaldehyde. When her mother, trying to reduce the boredom, sat on the other side of the sheeted door reading *Pollyanna* aloud, "I was so mad I threw the dishes from my dinner at the door. I was not in sync with the 'glad' girl."

When she complained of aches and pains in her joints during her convalescence, her parents tossed in some roller skates so she could get some exercise, but the pain came from rheumatic fever. Helen had to stay in bed six months, missed seventh and eighth grades, and ended up with a heart murmur. She was so weak, she recalls, that when she started to rearrange a silverware drawer, she found it "so enormous" a task that she could not finish it. Reading turned out to be her salvation—all twenty volumes of *The Book of Knowledge* and a compendium of "world greats"—great poems, great episodes of history, great ghost stories, "which haunted me for life." A BYU student tutored her and some other children for a couple of hours every day. Although she learned how to make "sunprints" on blueprint paper, she missed algebra and other mathematical subjects, an academic weakness she always regretted.

Teaching Years

At BYU, she was associate editor of the yearbook one year and editor the next, also student body vice president. She published a story in the literary magazine, learned reverence for all forms of life from zoology professor Martin P. Henderson and cultural dichotomies from English professor P. A. Christensen. After four years, Helen graduated from BYU's English-Speech departments and took her first teaching job in Kanab, an outpost that had to be reached by stagecoach, too far away for Helen to return home for Christmas. Along with the practical gifts like a warm nightgown, her mother sent her a metal box of Whitman's chocolates, an "extravagantly spontaneous"

gift. Helen and her roommate would bundle up in their quilts at night in the unheated bedroom, carefully cut out the bottom of a piece, eat the filling with a toothpick, and then eat the casing. "We made those chocolates last a long time," she recalls.

Kanab introduced her to the overwhelming beauty of Southern Utah, the autonomy of the classroom, and the limitations of life in a small community. Her students presented Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*—"I could do my own thing," she recalled, "which seemed very important to me." When a "spoiled brat," the son of a prominent local citizen, refused to "do his diagrams," Helen gave him a failing grade in English, which would keep him off the basketball team. To her shock, he played the next night, and she discovered that the principal had changed the grade. "What I learned from this experience was that my impetuosity had 'blown it,' " she recalls. "What I should have done was to go through channels."

She taught a year in Jordan (1925–26), then eight years in Bingham High School where her classroom bulged with ethnic students—" . . . Slavs, Greeks, Italians, and Jews. Many of the parents did not yet speak the language and lived in mining company housing on the hills above Bingham. They were all for doing whatever would help their families. The kids knew that this was an opportunity for them to get an education that was better than their mother's or father's, and everyone cooperated. Having them in a play was wonderful. The students were open to learning. We did *Strongheart*, a play about an Indian football star, in which a Greek boy played the lead. He brought the whole football team into the cast. We did debates and a yearbook, too—the full range of extra-curricular activities. In speech classes, I loved hearing them shout lines from Vachel Lindsey— 'Fat black bucks in a wine barrel room' or hush to 'I hear leaves drinking rain.' I never felt safer than I did on the streets of Bingham, because everybody looked out for each other. Many of the students went on to distinguished careers."

When Helen's mother became terminally ill in 1931 with encephalitis, Joseph B. Keeler, stake president and vice president of BYU, blessed her that she would recover and rear her family. "Then she died. This was too hard for my father to accept. He never spoke of her again. She was the center, the glue that held us all together. When she died, our family disintegrated." Her family slipped through the ecclesiastical cracks. "My father, in his grief, decided to move to Salt Lake to a rented and desolate house—to be near a half-sister who didn't really want to be involved. It was the depths of the Depression. No one came from the ward to counsel, 'Don't do this. Stay here in your Provo home where you at least have a roof over your heads and some kind of support group.' He never found work. The younger children

were displaced persons in the big city schools. My sister Louise had no center of reference in her new world as a student nurse. We were left spiritually adrift when we needed help."

Helen was suffering her own crises. "My school closed for lack of funds. I was ill and facing an operation for which there was no money. I was interested in a young man whom I naively believed had come into my life to take the place of my mother." She received a second blow when he bade her goodbye, leaving behind him as a separation gift "a bound volume of blank pages with a farewell poem on the last page." She accepted the implication that it was up to her to fill those empty pages but felt it as a "betrayal that had taken the ground from under my feet. We were all anchorless, locked into our own grief. We were never to coalesce as a family again." Helen wrote this poem about her mother's death:

House Cleaning

School nearly out, my mother used to say,
"Let's all work fast and have the cleaning done
Before she is home this Spring. She has worked hard.
She will be tired."

And so my coming was made festive by the
Shining order of the house. I must
Exclaim at newly painted chair and polished
Floors and gay rag rugs, the red warp
Brightly new.

And I must see how cunningly the curtains
Had been mended, and the worn place on the
Fireside chair, so that one scarcely noticed.
And I must pause by the green bowl of yellow
Buttercups and watch my mother's eyes shine.
She so loved flowers.

Now this year it is I whose hands must bring
The gracious gift of order to this house.
Clumsily I have tried to darn the drapes.
But windows gleam. Lilacs are freshly cut.
And somehow I have saved from here and there
Enough to buy the lamp she wanted so.
The house is flushed and eager, open doors
Expectant. I walk from room to room

Tense and alert. Why does she not come home
To say that it is good?

Helen returned to BYU in 1934 to work on a master's degree. "There I began to realize that each of us is a true original, that each of us has an inner core, and that each of us has multiple facets," she recalls, invoking unconsciously the image of the crystal.

HENRY

While she was teaching freshman English at BYU and working on her master's degree, she and Henry Stark moved closer into each other's orbits. By this time, Helen was thirty-five and he was thirty-six. They had dated each other and written sporadically since BYU undergraduate days. He had served a mission in California and had struggled through his education, dropping out each spring quarter to go home and plant crops, teaching school for two years at Gila Academy in Arizona, earning his Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Wisconsin, then working as a DuPont research chemist in Wilmington, Delaware.

They met again at a Christmas party in 1935 and experienced "such good vibes" that when Henry took her home that night he proposed. Despite the spontaneity of the proposal, Helen did not see it as reckless. "I felt guilty about leaving my younger siblings and my father," she recalls, "but we both felt that since we were getting on in years and since we had a lot of things in common that maybe we could make a good marriage." Henry returned to his job while she took care of some last business and whirled through a round of parties given by BYU friends. Then she set off alone on the train to Washington. Near Pittsburgh, a flood "marooned" it.

"Henry was coming from Wilmington to Washington, D.C., to meet me the next day, but I had no way to get in touch with him. I planned to stay with Elizabeth Wilson Sears. I couldn't alert her not to meet the train. Finally a small rescue train got us out; but between Wilmington and Washington, it quit, too. Somehow someone flagged down a local from Wilmington to Washington. I stood on the platform between two coaches, wondering whether I should turn to the right or to the left. I turned right, and Henry came from the back of the coach to meet me. I thought that was a good omen—and romantic, too. We were married the next day in the distinguished Washington LDS Chapel, which has been described as having a 'wistful tenderness' about it. It was a meaningful wedding." Helen, sensing "the energy that causes marriages to flower," wrote this sonnet:

A ring and words! The ring a slender thing,
The words half-whispered in the quiet church,
And yet some master-mind bent on the search
For truth might pause, for words and ring
Are latent with a physics of their own.
Where rose no rafters now the beams are broad;
Where lived no grasses, now trees grace the sod;
For that small ring another field is sown.

Garland your acre with the force set free
By words and ring. The pulse strengthens its beat.
Husband your plot in tenderness. As He
Loved out, a garden grew beneath His feet.
Creators now with Him, brush close to death.
Pass on the sacred gift of living breath.

In trying to explain later to their children her sense of family, Helen included this statement from the Pan Pacific Southeast Asia Woman's Association:

> The family is greater than love itself, for it includes, ennobles, makes permanent all that is best in love.
> The pain of life is hallowed by it;
> The drudgery is sweetened; its pleasures consecrated.
> It is the great trysting place of the generations where past and future flash into the reality of the present.
> And it is the great discipline through which each generation learns anew that no man can live for himself alone.

Their first home was in Arden, Delaware, a single-tax community of professional people and artists that she called "bohemian." She learned to throw pots on a wheel. They admired its weaving shop and its forge, skinny-dipped "once" late at night in its woodland stream that had been dammed for a community pool, explored the East Coast and Canada in Henry's "ancient car," and just "honeymooned." For both of them, driven from childhood by the necessities of work, family responsibilities, and economic pressures, it was "a time to relax, to do what we wanted." For Helen, it was a time to listen to voices from sides of herself that had never had a chance to speak.

They both wanted children, but none came. Finally, tests revealed that scar tissue from an earlier operation had permanently blocked Helen's fallopian tubes. In the hospital, absorbing the news, Helen wrote "Blight":

August is the month of broken dreams:
The amber pear splits in the grass, worm-eaten;
The fish drift sideways in the shrunken streams;
And in the fields the fecund shocks lie beaten
With hail. What are those puny stalks of gray
Seen through a midday dusk of drifting soil?
Listen! The crickets work on stubbled hay,
And canker takes the perfect rose as spoil.

And I who kept my body for this fruiting,
Know now the wandering seed can find no rest—
Part of the waste of August's heavy looting,
Part of the waste of nature's heavy jest.
September, can your gentler hands redeem
The scattered fragments of the broken dream?

With a gentle irony, the answer was yes. Two of their three adopted children were conceived in September. Helen began writing letters to adoption agencies. Finally, they found two children simultaneously, David Candland and Sarah Lydia (Sally). Five years later, Karen arrived. All three adoptions involved spiritual experiences. "When I flew to Utah for Karen, heading toward that panorama of blue sky and white clouds that we never saw in the East and holding the purpose of that journey in my heart, I thought, 'This is what it means to be in the hands of God.' Each of our three children has been a direct, unexpected, and tremendous gift."

Wilmington Branch

Helen bore no memories—good or bad—away from Provo Fifth Ward. "I can't remember one teacher, one bishop, or one Sunday School class that had any impact on me," she says regretfully. "It was totally bland." Out of that near blandness, however, came one haunting dream. Alone in the ward basement, she saw her father come in, stark naked except for his hat, cocked at a jaunty angle. He was smiling defiantly, but guiltily, and she knew he had gambled away all his clothes. "I don't know how to explain that dream," Helen muses. Did he represent what she was getting from the Church as negative? Had the Church stripped him of something important? Was she angry at him for not being a better provider? She simply doesn't know.

"I do know," she points out, "that for a person born into the Church with pioneer forebears, the Church is the ground of being, a parent figure against which one must push to test the limits." For her, such

pushing early took the form of political activism. In 1922 when she voted for the first time, she was a flamboyant Democrat in a radically Republican family, and she recalls her father, whose cash crop was wool, leading family prayer one morning with the plea that "Helen will be able to see the light and recognize the importance of the Smoot-Hartley Tariff Bill on wool."

There was no unit of the Church in Wilmington when Helen and Henry were married. In 1938, another member "gathered up the few people who were local converts" and organized a small branch. The newly organized Delaware Branch found strength and stability with infusions of western Mormons, "mostly scientists, starting out careers with young families. It was as though the western Saints were sending back their children to their eastern roots," muses Helen. The branch "really took off" after World War II. For the next three decades, Helen and Henry were the generous parents of that "extended family."

"None of us had much money," she recalls, "but our relationship was very close. My children knew branch members as Aunt Melba or Uncle Alton. We owned five acres, so we often hosted parties. Everybody came—whole families. It was heady stuff. Basically, we designed our own meetings. We were free agents."

Even in "dismal, rented quarters" where they swept up cigarette butts and beer cans before meetings, they generated "wonderful programs." For Christmas programs, Helen and Henry cut loads of greens from the thousand trees on their property and toiled up four flights of stairs without a guardrail to their meeting room on the fourth floor of the Odd Fellows Building. They created their own lighting from "yards and yards" of electrical cord and created their own scripts as well.

These years were busy for Helen. She developed an English program for a new high school, teaching three classes, and worked in community theater for several years, including starring as Mama in *I Remember Mama*. She prepared the body of a sister in the ward for burial, wrote a monthly newsletter, taught in every auxiliary. In those days, stake boundaries were miles apart. A stake event involved hours of driving. Helen recalls going through "114 different stoplights between Wilmington and Philadelphia" to put on a stake production of *Promised Valley*. "It was mediocre because we spent most of the time on the road. We learned to do our own thing at home."

It was also a time of wonderful "interdenominational cross-fertilization." Among Henry's professional colleagues at DuPont who had become their personal friends were Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Unitarians, Baptists, Lutherans, and especially Quakers. "A Lutheran artist taught several sessions on finger painting in our Relief Society. A Presbyterian woman taught us how to make hats. I was teaching

literature of the Bible lessons to the Baptists and did a program on the book of Job. The Episcopalians warmly welcomed us as fellow searchers to a lecture series with out-of-state speakers. I participated in a fascinating Quaker conference where we role-played the expulsion of Hagar, some identifying with Sarah, some with Abraham, some with Hagar, some with Ishmael. Each found his or her own meaning. I took the same idea back to our Sunday School and we did an open-ended role-playing of the return of the prodigal son, exploring feelings and meanings. How did the father feel? the prodigal? the good son? Our son David, who was dyslexic, attended a Quaker private school with specially trained teachers. We outfitted our children at the Quaker yearly swap shop and even sold our kittens there. Nobody tried to proselyte us. We didn't try to proselyte them. We just enjoyed each other's uniqueness and contributions."

After the experience with ethnic diversity in Bingham, this experience with other religions was another broadening encounter for Helen, reinforcing both her happy hospitableness and her dislike of regimentation. She mentions in passing a problem with "Salt Lake City bureaucracies when we tried to buy sacrament trays and the fittings; but ordinarily, we were just left alone." The periodic visits from General Authorities were "usually benign" since the men were "almost always too busy or preoccupied to deal with us intimately." The one exception in these bland, busy visits was what she calls her "encounter with the iron fist."

"I was teaching a Sunday School class of bright, teen girls. Their fathers were Ph.D.'s. We could talk freely as mutual friends. During a lesson on the Godhead, we pondered the fact that the Holy Ghost represents compassion, insight, tenderness, and guidance. Someone suggested that if we had a Father and a Son, we have two sides of a triangle. The other side of the triangle should maybe be the Mother. We thought this was a great idea and could even get it confirmed by an authority since a young Bruce R. McConkie was our conference visitor.

"So, naively, I asked him, 'Do you think the Holy Ghost could possibly be the Heavenly Mother?'

"He rose to his considerable height and thundered. 'Sister Stark, go home and get down on your knees and ask God to forgive you. And if you never sin again the rest of your life, maybe he will forgive you.' "

"Alas," sighs Helen, "I did not repent, but I did feel betrayed. When my mother died, we were groping for bread and all that came into our hands was stones. This time, the stone was thrown." A third betrayal, "less harsh and with a redemptive resolution," came when

she was doing research for the history of the Church in Delaware. During the family's two weeks of vacation in Utah, she scheduled a couple of days for research at the Church Archives, taking with her a letter from Bishop Ted Johnson saying, "Please let Sister Stark have any material you have on Delaware and the LDS Church." Very protective of archival material, staff member A. Willis Lund checked his files and told her there was nothing on Delaware.

"What about Philadelphia?" Helen asked. "It's only eighteen miles away, and I know it had an active branch."

"Your letter does not say Philadelphia. It says Delaware."

"Well," said Helen desperately, "I remember a man named Applegate was an early missionary. I know he kept a journal. Is it here?"

"Are you a relative?"

"No."

"I cannot let you see it if you are not a relative."

Helen tried every approach she could think of and came up against the same stone-wall attitude. "When I got through that day of totally unproductive work," she recalls, "I was so tired I did not dare to drive back to Spanish Fork, so I called up Ted's mother-in-law, Nan Bullen, and asked, 'Could I come up and see you and maybe stay overnight?' " Sister Bullen welcomed Helen warmly, heard her story, and said, "I think you should talk with Lowell Bennion."

Helen recalls, "She called him and incredibly, he came over at once. He took me up to another dimension. He did not criticize the librarian, but he helped me to see things from a higher plane. In that one day, I had experienced both the betrayal and the reconciliation. I pondered that. Maybe peacemakers are nearer than we realize."

Quaker Influence

Helen identifies a significant stage in her spiritual development, triggered by her precarious health but rooted in her affinity for Quaker thought. When she was fifty-five in 1954, her blood pressure shot up to 225 over 90. It took several months before her condition was correctly diagnosed as coarctation of the aorta. She wanted desperately to go to Pendle Hill, a Quaker center of learning, for a course on the records of Jesus—"it was almost a prompting"—but she was simultaneously called to be Relief Society president. She agonized over a decision to accept the Church calling until an LDS doctor doing postgraduate study in ophthalmology at the University of Pennsylvania visited the branch, examined her closely, and warned, "You must not do it. You would die." With this medical advice and the mission

president's permission, she said no and went on to Pendle Hill. "It was as if some archangel were guiding me," she says simply.

In the study group was Elined Kotschnig, a Jungian analyst whose remarks "electrified" Helen. Immediately, Helen knew that this woman could help her in her quest, and Elined agreed to conduct a sort of seminar-therapy long distance, by correspondence.

"It was a sea change," recalls Helen. "Elined felt that my long history of busyness had overbalanced me on the masculine sides of thinking and doing. We strove to rebalance the feminine sides of intuition and feeling, working primarily with my dreams. I would divide a page into two columns, record a dream and tell what I thought it meant. In the other column, she would add comments or questions, often filling the margins. With occasional meetings in person, we pursued this method for many exciting months. One simple example of the transformative power of this approach was a dream I had that a bull was charging my little children. I threw myself over the children to protect them and then woke up.

"Elinid said, 'Finish the dream.'

"I protested, 'But I can't. I woke up.'

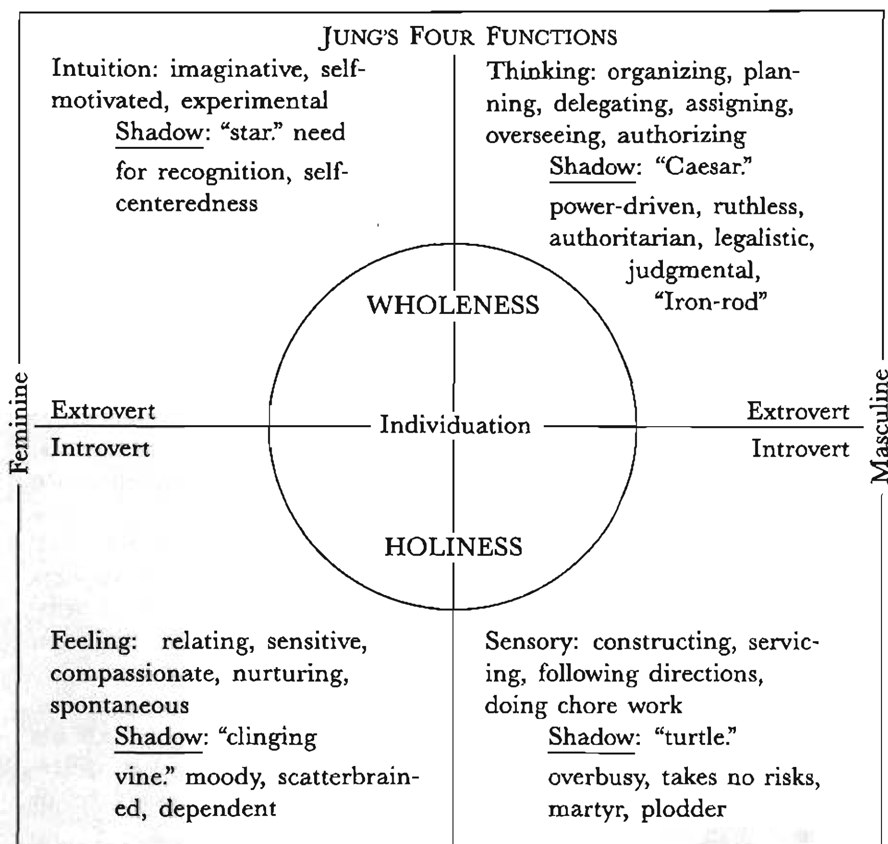
"She repeated, 'Finish the dream.'

"So I put myself back in that situation, huddled over my children with the bull snorting fire and pawing the ground over me. I looked up into its face. It was Ferdinand, the gentle bull from Munro Leaf's children's story! So you see, the authority figure, even in its violence, is not all that bad if you face it. Run from it, and it can gore you. Turn and face it and it may just be Ferdinand.

"A very significant breakthrough came, through my feelings and identification with my female body. When my mother died, I stopped menstruating for three months and did not weep. I had denied my feelings; and for much of the rest of my life since then, perhaps because of my infertility as well, I had also denied my feelings and my femaleness. I can't describe the experience I had, but the imagery came from menstruation. 'Pour the great mother, pour with pain and joy.'

"I attended Elined's annual conferences on religion and psychology at Haverford College in Pennsylvania based on Carl Jung's concepts. They became a great influence in my life. His conceptualization of the human psyche was of four functions—intuition, thinking, feeling, and sensory—polarized between masculine and feminine, introvert and extrovert, expression and repression but ideally finding a balanced wholeness in a circle enclosing the center cross.

"This approach explained to me in significant ways some of the areas I had long resented in the Church's treatment of women. Our whole culture is patriarchal, not just the Church, but I found my



examples close to home. The Church mandates that women be assigned the two quadrants of feeling (providing nurture) and sensory (doing chores). Their job is to give, give, give, with little opportunity to fill their empty buckets. The feminist movement has struck back by seizing the masculine thinking quadrant with its management functions, but overbalance—even corrective overbalance—is still unproductive.

"I felt increased wholeness emerging from this experience. I began perceiving life as a mandala with a central core of self. The Church had always provided form and structure; the Quakers gave me openness and experimentation.

"All relationships are relationships with tension in them—marriage, the Church, families, citizenship—but the goal is reconciliation. Reading the quadrants clockwise from the upper right, you have mind,

hands, heart, and spirit. Balancing them and moving within them is what life is all about. The spiritual is the hardest to achieve.

"I would like to be able to move from thinking, doing, feeling, or intuition, as the need arises. In old age, no longer able to 'do' even for myself, the mandala is more a symbol for me than the linear hierarchical chart. I think of such noble lines from the Bible as: 'Be still and know that I am God' (Ps. 46:10); 'underneath are the everlasting arms' (Deut. 33:27); 'the truth shall make you free' (John 8:32), and 'by the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread' (Gen. 3:19). You see, each has to do with one of the quadrants."

With these "two legs to stand on"—the Church and the Jungian concept of the human psyche, Helen survived the aorta transplant in 1954 that gave her "a second chance at life and the time I needed to rear my children." She continued to reach out in many new directions, eventually serving on the governing board of the Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology.

And she remained profoundly committed to diversity—"the need for minority truth." She recalls a family friend who explained his view of prophecy: The prophet is in a tower looking out of the single window and calling down instructions to us about what he sees. Helen challenged this view almost by reflex. She would enlarge the tower to make room for more than just one person and stretch around it a continuous band of windows "so that we could all look out and all see many different visions of the truth. How," she asks, "can you understand a diamond if you never rotate it to see more than one facet or never hold it in more than one light?"

THE RETURN TO UTAH

In 1969, the time seemed right for a return to Utah roots and family. Helen and Henry bought a two-and-a-half acre tract on a little lake in Salem, and Helen gave away all her canning jars and two-year's food supply. The transplant in reverse didn't take well. Salem would later develop into a bedroom community for Provo, but she and Henry were the first "outsiders" to retire there. They got off on the wrong foot in the ward when, exhausted, she was too intimidated to tell the bishop who immediately called her to take over the MIA drama department that she was too tired. Instead she sidestepped. "In Delaware," she protested, "we didn't go into these 'canned' programs. We did creative dramatics." The bishop, she was sure, thought her "an Eastern snob."

Helen continued to alienate some townsfolk by spearheading a drive to stop the city from turning a beautiful little cattail marsh, replete

with wildlife, into a landfill. She failed, "perhaps because my leadership was considered alien by the local residents"; but out of it grew a 1972 *Ensign* article, "Another Kind of Tithe," a plea for responsible stewardship of wetlands. It was the *Ensign's* first environmental article. She still grieves over the loss of the "irretrievable beauty" and mourns the "desolation" inflicted on that one corner of the planet.

Earlier, she had protested in vain as the foxes that frolicked on their meadows in Wilmington were wiped out because of the possibility that they might have rabies. The meadow was turned into another subdivision.

But she did not withdraw into her private pain. As recently as the spring of 1990, while simultaneously preparing a presentation on Mary and Martha for a BYU women's conference, she also wrote a stinging letter of protest to the *Provo Herald* (14 March 1990) denouncing a multi-million dollar scheme to "develop" the Seven Peaks area as a ski resort. Calling the mountains "our primary treasure," she cried shame on the city for approving this scheme "to bring fun and toys to a small minority of largely transient dilettantes" and attacked its plan to "rape our hills, pollute our aquifers, bury gas pipes underground in earthquake-prone territory, commandeer our water, clog our roads, and dump its waste—where?"

She draws an image from her childhood of the damaging relationship humans have established with nature and identifies with Annie Dillard's story from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. A polyphemus moth cocoon was brought into the classroom and placed in a canning jar where it emerged, struggling. As its six-inch wings dried, they could not expand; it could never fly. Annie Dillard will never forget seeing it put down beside the road where it struggled along with wings that could not open.

Helen and her children once found a cecropia moth cocoon and hung it above a jar of water to keep it moist. When the moth emerged feebly from the cocoon, it dropped into the jar. They fished it out, and its wings dried. Then, sensing the air current in the room, it flew instinctively to the fireplace, but the screen kept it from reaching freedom.

She recalls "luna moths, wonderfully green with elegantly shaped wings, clinging to our outside screen doors. They are all gone now. We have destroyed them, mainly with pesticides. We need to awaken to our responsibility for other creatures that share this earth with us."

Helen's return to Utah also brought her a fuller entrance into the intellectual life of Mormonism. Her bishop in Delaware, Ted Johnson, had returned from general conference in 1966 beaming. "I have a treasure for you, Helen," he said. "This is the first issue of DIALOGUE." Helen thus became a charter subscriber and, years later back in Utah,

put together her almost complete set and donated them to DIALOGUE as a fundraiser for collectors. "That was something I could give back, when it has given me so much. I feel that DIALOGUE has been on the cutting edge. I have enjoyed seeing the *Ensign* become more sophisticated, largely, I think, because of the therapeutic effect of DIALOGUE and the other magazines. There has been a cross-fertilization as people have published in the *Ensign* and also in DIALOGUE. I think it's a sound reconciliation of Liahona and Iron Rod. *Sunstone* has freshened a stuffy climate, and its symposia are courageous and insightful, a forum for minority voices and their portion of the truth, a needed religious component.

"And dear *Exponent II*. What a desperately needed vehicle it is for women writers. It is like the mythical phoenix, rising from the ashes of the destroyed *Relief Society Magazine* and *Young Women's Journal*. It is hard to kill a living need."

Helen was among the liberal Mormon women attending the International Year of the Woman conference in 1977 when thousands of bishop-assigned attendees, uninformed, suspicious, and hostile, jammed the sessions. "It was a terrible, terrible experience," she says. "Hordes of Relief Society women sabotaged the sessions. The hate at the conference was palpable. I feel that the far right had been marshalled to humiliate, discipline, and defeat a reasonably benign minority stance. For many thinking and progressive LDS women—women who had been leaders in ward, stake, and community affairs—the Church's adamant stand against the ERA was not only baffling but vindictive. Although women like Beverly Campbell conceded that pro-ERA women had free agency, the reality was that discrimination against ERA advocates resulted in some women having their temple recommends withdrawn, being released from ward or stake positions, and certainly suffering many, many instances of ostracism and disapproval."

She was one of a group of Provo women, who, alarmed at the widening gap between traditionalists and the new Mormon feminists, wrote to President Kimball. The exchange of eight letters was not healing (see Amy Bentley's essay, "Comforting the Motherless Children: The Alice Louise Reynolds Forum" in this issue). These excerpts reveal the tone:

> We desperately need to know whether, after serious consideration, soul-searching, and prayer, you indeed and in fact find us unworthy, a minority open to attack, and ultimately expendable. If not, *can the word get out* that Mormon feminists are not to be subjected to intimidations, rejection for Church assignments, loss of employment, and psychological excommunication. Every difference of opinion or sincere question should not be answered with a threatening indictment of one's testimony. We are women who love the Lord, the Gospel, and

> the Church; we have served, tithed, and raised righteous children in Zion. We plead for the opportunity to continue to do so in an atmosphere of respect and justice. For decades we have been part of the solution, whatever the need has been; we are saddened to now be considered part of the problem.

President Kimball did not reply, but an undersecretary's brief note, requesting permission to send the letter to the women's stake presidents "for their comments" was disheartening. Another letter brought the same intimidating results. It was Helen who wrote the final despairing phrase that closed the exchange, "As we now fall back on our own resources for solutions, these words come to mind: 'Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.' "

In the aftermath of the defeat of the ERA, Helen comments, "The moderate center on both sides must feel ashamed of the radicals who went too far. Even moderate General Authorities may regret some of the individuals and groups they enlisted." For her it was part of a sorry and desperate battle that inflicted "deep wounds on our sisterhood." The gulf of mistrust and suspicion created between traditional and feminist Mormon women "has not yet been healed."

Although Helen speaks approvingly of policy changes that allow women to say closing prayers, she summarizes, "I think that the Church is doing a great PR job about accepting women, but that's all it is. God still runs a single-parent universe."

Yet for Helen, ordaining women to the priesthood is no solution: "Many men have been wounded by patriarchy as well as by their own fathers. They are numb, naive, and passive. The archivist who refused to disturb his stacks on my behalf, the General Authority's anger at my mention of Mother in Heaven, the cold secretarial response to our emotional letters—these are all hollow reactions of men who lack full feeling. They require healing in the feminine quadrants of feeling and intuition, but they must heal themselves. Women are irrelevant in this quest. Men value thinking, delegating, planning, assigning, overseeing, and authorizing, reserving those functions for themselves. In the Church, women are assigned to feel and nurture for men. But moving women into the management quadrant, by giving them priesthood, without having men make a corresponding shift into the feeling quadrant will only create a new set of problems. *Women's power should arise from its own creative center:*

"It doesn't bother me that women do not stand in the circle for the blessing of babies. I enjoy this as an all-male rite, a movement from closedness to openness, a blessing that affirms accepting fathering responsibility. I enjoy watching the deacons and responding to the silence during the sacrament. You can use that silence if you wish."

A revitalizing moment for Helen came at an early Sunstone symposium where Linda Wilcox gave a paper on Heavenly Mother and Grethe Ballif Peterson was the commentator. "I don't like thinking of myself as a mentor," confesses Helen. "It makes me feel uncomfortable and inadequate. But this experience was different. Sitting in front of me were many of the wonderful young women I admired whose paths had crossed mine because of the women's movement—Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Jill Mulvay Derr, Mary Bradford, Lavina Fielding Anderson, and others. It was a 'gathered' group. At the end of the paper, which was enlightening, and the commentary, which was moving, as we rose and began talking, I felt, 'Now I can die. I know they will carry on.' I felt that they were my spiritual daughters. Into their competent hands I could safely leave my causes. It was a moment of transcendence in which I bonded completely with them. And they have all gone on, sometimes by end-runs, to make real contributions. There is a yeast in them which cannot be punched down by ecclesiastical battering. Alas, the Church has not taken advantage of this energy source."

Another turning point came in 1988 with Henry's death. All of the children were home for the Christmas of 1987 with their exuberant grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Before his two daughters finally left, Henry gave them a father's blessing, speaking "deeply and tenderly. We were a small but precious microcosm in God's great universe." A few weeks later, he died of a ruptured aneurism. Helen recalls her gratitude for a home teachers' blessing which "rebuked the pain, allowing him to die in peace." The ward has been a constant support.

CONCLUSION

Helen speaks of her marriage and Henry's companionship on their "singular journey" with relish and tenderness. "We worked hard—perhaps too hard. We had dreams that seemed slow to be fulfilled. We had immediate joys that we took for granted. Henry's protection for me was solace after years of economic competition."

She brims with gratitude for the sources of spiritual enrichment—"nature, prayer, music, art, family, poetry, BYU, the Church, other churches, and friends." True spirituality for her appears in two components. The first is an "everyday spirituality like kindness and compassion and openness. This is sort of the dailyness of spirituality that keeps our relationships going, a kind of corporate goodness." But the second kind is "a private spirituality which you feel in your awareness of beauty—the mountain and the shadows, the moments of transcendence. They come as a gift, unplanned. I had one riding horseback

alone through the Kaibab forest before a gathering storm. I took off my hat, shook down my hair, and leaned over the horse's neck as it sped down a pine-needled path. I felt one with earth forces in a moment of belonging. Another one came in a Quaker meeting when, in the silence, I lost consciousness of myself as a person and seemed to be part of a great tenderness, a universe that was humming and radiant.

"I think that when we can arrive at some reconciliation of the opposites, when they are held in creative tension, then we are not either/or, but are both. Maybe even something better than both.

"Mine has been a rebellious spirit, and it has come hard to accept authoritarian directives, but God's crosses, as Fenelon says, carry with them their own healing. The crosses of my own making I am still learning how to lay down."

In 1976, at the age of seventy-four, she wrote: "I stand at this point in time overwhelmed by the beauty, the mystery, and the complexity of life. Searching for my own set of values, I have known something of the dark night of the soul. Out of that struggle there emerges a sense of awe at the goodness of God. I have sensed what it is to be in his hands. The great wonder of religion to me is that God can turn darkness into light. This power of redemption is at the heart of the universe."