

We Are Not Who We Think We Are

by Beverly Hamilton

Curiosity about the mind's mysteries led me to question how we become who we think we are. One scenario is that our incredible imaginations invent stories from the kaleidoscope of memories imprinted on our brain. These scripts are then programmed with emotions and projected onto the screen of our life. We then declare, "This is who I am!" Feeling separate, we become fearful of our projections, forgetting we are the producer of our movie. We vow to protect our character to the death, which is how our movies end.

How confusing and unreliable is that!

The Course tells us, "The world can teach no images of you unless you want to learn them. There will come a time when images have all gone by and you will see you know not what you are." (T31.V.17) "Let us be still an instant, and forget all things we ever learned, all thoughts we had, and every preconception that we hold of what things mean and what their purpose is." (T31.I.12) In that stillness we become aware of the love that accompanies our stories like soft background music and God's light guiding us out of our darkened theatre in gentle steps. Those times I allow the path to appear one step at a time, I feel the peace of that guidance. When I choose my own path, I am reminded, "There is no path that does not lead to Him."

One of these steps led me to San Francisco and a position at Children's Hospital Child Development Center. Working professionally with children identified as 'less than perfect' presented me with many opportunities to observe the limitations of our 'identities.' I instinctively

accepted the children with no judgment, seeing them beyond their labels. They felt separate and had forgotten how to laugh. One day little Verna told our small group that she liked the rain because she sat on her porch and waited for lightening to strike her. Since I encouraged them to help one another, I suggested to Larry, who had

his own difficulties he might talk with her alone. After a short while I heard giggling. They returned with smiles on their faces and no longer feeling separate and sad. Small acts of kindness and laughter are wonderful healers.

Another step guided me to a Miracles lunch. After hearing a lecture on biofeedback, I was directed to contact Dr. Gerald Jampolsky. He was doing research on Alpha wave training, so I participated. He was also in the process of organizing the Center for Attitudinal Healing.

Several months later, Jerry called and said a friend of his, Judy Skutch, was bringing a healer from New York to the UC Medical Center for a biofeedback experiment in healing. He asked if I knew anyone who had cancer they could use as a subject. As fate would have it, a co-worker agreed to

participate, and her cancer was cured! This occurred just before Judy met Helen Schucman and Bill Thetford at Columbia University.

Jerry's next call was to invite me to lunch to share with me something Judy had sent to him. When I arrived, he showed me three yellow books with *A Course in Miracles* on the cover. I asked, "Is this another religion?" He said "No, it's just a set of books with a unifying spiritual theme." He asked if I would take a look at the books. I took them home and gradually began to see familiar messages, especially the one about unraveling the false identity we've created.

Helen and Bill soon arrived in California to meet with people interested in learning more about the Course. Helen and I shared an interest in children with special needs. Her primary question to me was, "Is the Course helpful?" I truthfully answered 'yes' and that I thought there were many levels to come. I must be psychic. The lessons keep coming, even as I write this!

Four years after receiving the Course, I met a wonderful man, Ulf Hamilton, who was originally from Sweden. He was in a transition after a divorce and had many questions, so he was naturally drawn to the Course. Two years after we met, Ulf and I married. Bill Thetford did a reading from his book, *Choose Once Again*, at our wedding.



(L to R) Bill Thetford, Beverly and Ulf Hamilton

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Ulf and I raised his two children. Our gratitude to the Course increased, as did our lessons. I learned that families offer many opportunities to practice forgiveness.

Celebrating our twenty-third anniversary dinner, tears came to my eyes as we held hands and tried to absorb an unexpected turn of events. Earlier that day a psychologist had announced after reviewing Ulf's test results, that he might have dementia.

Knowing the limitation of labels, I did some research and discovered Ulf had Sleep Apnea that caused small, silent strokes. He had gone undiagnosed because he was tall and slim and didn't snore. Ulf was accepted into the first study with Stanford University correlating diminished neurological capacity and Sleep Apnea. Sleep Apnea was masking as dementia. Treatment helped but the damage to his brain was irreversible.

We were blessed to have had the

Course in our lives as we met this challenge. Our shared understanding of the principals of the Course was essential to our communication over the next six years. As the person Ulf created began to

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unravel, the words of the Course telling us "the present is the only time there is," took on new meaning. The past no longer defined him and time became irrelevant. It was necessary for me to shift my own perception of any importance I placed on the past with regard to our relationship. Choosing to share the present moment

with Ulf taught me many lessons about my own identity. He became my teacher.

Ulf recognized his limitations and explored his new way of being. He would simply say, "I am not the person I used to be." This acceptance opened him to many precious, present moments. Ulf opening to his spirit is what my book, *Our Timeless Year – Miracles of Love Lighten the Clouds of Dementia*, is about.

One of those precious moments came on New Year's Eve. There was a fire in the fireplace and the table was set with lighted candles. When Ulf asked what the celebration was about, I brought out a calendar to show the progression of time. Ulf said, "Beverly, sit down." He took my hand, looked deep into my eyes and said in his beautiful voice, "My being here with you, holding your hand, is the only time there is." He now had no need of time or an identity other than the one he shared with God in which he remembered only his loving thoughts.

