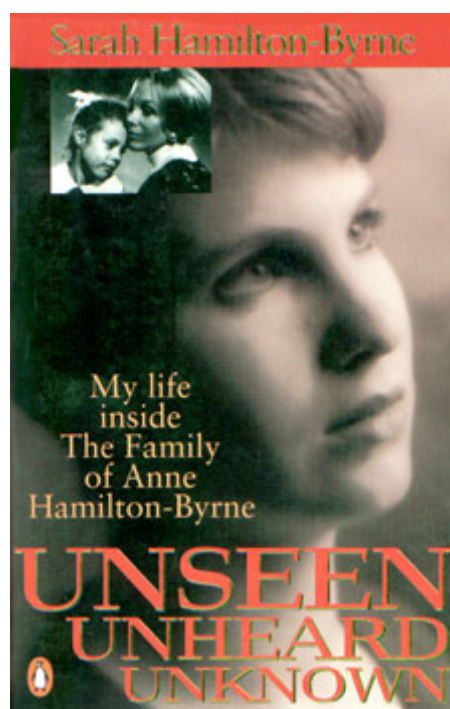


## Excerpt from UNSEEN, UNHEARD, UNKNOWN by Sarah Moore (Hamilton-Byrne)

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My mother was Anne Hamilton-Byrne, the leader of a small sect in the Dandenongs called the Family or the Great White Brotherhood. I was a small part of her plan to collect children in what she herself once called a "scientific experiment". Later I discovered it was her intention that we children would continue her sect after the earth was consumed by a holocaust. She saw us as the "inheritors of the earth". I didn't know that then. In those days I was just a child. A child of a guru, but a child no less.

Twenty-two to twenty-eight children in all lived at Uptop in its heyday, although the fosters had varying lengths of stay

She used to say that she couldn't remember all the dates very well because she had so many children. Maybe, in retrospect, we should have realised that was weird but then we never thought it was anything out of the ordinary. She decided upon sets of twins and triplets and gave us ages and birth-dates to fit in with that idea. Birthday changes were just something you accepted. It was as if Anne knew so much more about everything than us and she just might be revealing another piece of our life plan if she changed our birthdays.

We were the children of The Family, the children of Anne Hamilton-Byrne. We were dressed alike. Most of the girls' hair was dyed blond, cut into fringes and worn long with identical hairstyles and identically-coloured ribbons. All the boys had bowl haircuts.



**Portraits of the guru. (Anne Hamilton-Byrne)**  
**The cult members were given these photos, to put on their altars to worship.**

Why did Anne collect all of us children and make this false 'family'? I often wonder just what it was she wanted of us. Was it just to satisfy her ego? To satisfy her great need to be worshipped and adored by those around her?

Why did she raise us in almost total social isolation, miles from anywhere, with minimal contact with other humans apart from the sect members who looked after us? Why did she subject us to the bizarre and cruel regimen in which we grew up? Was it to demonstrate that she had the power to create a generation that would be reared with her beliefs and believing in her? I suspect perhaps that there were more sinister motives than these alone. Some of us had multiple birth certificates and passports, and citizenship of more than one country. Only she knows why thus was and why we were also all dressed alike, why most of us even had our hair dyed identically blond. I can only conjecture because I will never know for sure. However I suspect that she went to such great lengths in order to enable her to move children around, in and out of the country. Perhaps even to be sold overseas. I'm sure there is a market somewhere in the world for small blond children with no traceable identities. If she did it, it was a perfect scam. Many ex-sect members have said that they were aware that Anne was creating children by a "breeding program" in the late 1960s. These were 'invisible' kids, because they had no papers and there is no proof that they ever existed. Yet we Hamilton-Byrne children had multiple identities. These identities could perhaps have been loaned to other children and the similarity of our appearance used to cover up their absence. One little blond kid looks very like another in a passport photo. I don't suppose we will ever know the truth because only Anne Hamilton-Byrne knows the truth about the whole affair and the truth is something she will never tell.

I find a lot of my childhood hard to remember. There seem to be very few incidents that actually stand out for me. I remember what our routine was but I don't remember many individual days. I think this is because we had none of the normal milestones that mark the passing of the years for other children. We never changed grades or teachers. We never celebrated birthdays and it was only occasionally that we celebrated or got presents at Christmas or Easter, if Anne and Bill were there. Life went on and now it seems that the only times that stand out were particularly violent ones. I try to remember things other than beatings and bad times and it's quite hard. There must have been long periods when nothing in particular happened, bad or good, and we may have had ordinary child-like feelings of fun and excitement then, but these are mostly forgotten.

Because this all happened to me so long ago and because it was such a bizarre childhood, maybe I won't remember every detail. Yet all the events that I describe DID happen and I will try to recount them with truth and honesty. I will tell the truth as best I can. I know Anne and Bill Hamilton-Byrne and their followers will not want to hear the truth from one of us and they will say I'm lying or I'm mad.

When I was little Anne used to sometimes slam a carving knife down on the bench while we

were eating and scream at us that the next person to step out of line, or move, or be caught with bad manners, would get their 'bum cut off'. It was a prospect that filled us with terror but it was just a ploy to keep us scared and under control.

Control was everything then. I'm generally not scared of Anne any more though sometimes the fear of her and her followers still grips me. The motto of the sect is 'Unseen , Unheard and Unknown', and even now the thought of the consequences of betraying that motto still worries me sometimes. I 've had death threats from sect members before. They may try to kill or hurt me for speaking out against Anne, but only under her direct orders. Many sect members have taken a vow to kill those who harm their Master. They will not walk up to me with a gun. But if I mysteriously drive over a cliff one night because my brakes are suddenly not working, or perish in a sudden fire in my flat, it will be them.

I am training to be a doctor but sometimes I think my medical career will be sabotaged because there are still many in the sect who have a lot of influence in professional and academic circles. It may sound melodramatic, but I know that some who were Anne's enemies have disappeared in strange circumstances. But I will have to risk her anger and hatred because I need to speak about what happened, to tell with truth and certainty the story as it occurred. It is a story that must be told, and I will make sure that it will be, despite any danger to me. Because no-one knows the truth of what happened except those of us that lived through it. If I do not write this the story will never be heard.

It is hard now for me to explain what it was like to others. Six years later, it seems an alien world; often it feels unreal to me, as if it happened to someone else. It takes an effort to tap into the memories and also the very different thought patterns that marked the way we used to exist. It takes courage to pierce the barrier of sanity and normality that I have carefully erected over the last few years so that I can function in the outside world. Because if I thought and remembered and dwelt in consciousness in that world we grew up in, I could not function today as I do. Yet this story cannot be told without at least some painful memories being involved, for without the pain there would be no Uptop - our background would merely be the harmless, slightly eccentric ideal that the Family always try to convey to the media.

I am not telling this story for revenge or because it is sensational. I am telling it because it is essential in the process of me growing away from my past. This is a story that I think needs to be told. It is in part also to come to terms with the reality that this, like it or not, was my past.

Perhaps once I tell it, I might be able to leave it behind me for good, and finally the nightmares may stop. Then I will be finally free of my childhood, finally perhaps able to shed the shackles of fear and self-loathing that seventeen years of indoctrination instilled as part of my being. No longer will I be a prisoner or a victim.

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There are certain things one remembers about childhood. I remember darkness. I remember that light was something I valued. I remember how Anne hated bright lights and that none of the globes in the overhead lights were allowed to be more than twenty watts. How the windows were heavily curtained. How dull things were. I didn't know it could have been brighter inside. It's funny, one of the things the police who rescued us years later commented on, was how dark the place was and how it stank of cats.

It was not until the early 1980s, when I was about twelve or thirteen, that we got mainline electricity. Because there was no electricity the Aunties had to wash everything by hand. This made them angry about dirty clothes and getting your smock dirty was a major crime. There was no generator Uptop in the early days and I remember the Aunties carrying water to the house in buckets. Light came from little gas lamps. Light was rationed in the dark days of childhood. Later the lights ran from a generator during the main part of the day and we used

gaslight at night and in the early mornings.

Until we got the electricity connected we had never watched television, except possibly on rare occasions when we were overseas. In fact I don't think I even knew that it existed until after the electricity was connected. We were in complete isolation Uptop. We didn't understand where we were situated, even near what city. We didn't even know that we were close to Melbourne, a city of three million people. We had no concept even of what a city was, or of any other human community other than that in which we existed.

When I was little I thought that 'overseas' was over the other side of the lake, and that was where Mummy and Daddy went when they went away. We used to wave out the window to them at night before we went to sleep.

Although we travelled overseas several times, it seemed we basically travelled along a road, hopped on a 'plane, got off, got into a car and travelled to one of Anne's properties in America or England. That was it. We weren't often allowed to see newspapers, in fact that happened only after we were quite a bit older and even then they'd been censored. We were then only allowed to look at the sports section, and that was if we begged, as we loved cricket.

I remember the rigidity of the routines of our life like a march, it went on and on. Looking back, I can see that any game or hobby that we started we would get hooked on, playing it over and over again in our limited spare time. If we got into a game or fantasy we tended to want to keep on with it and it assumed the utmost importance in our lives.

It might have appeared that we were obsessive kids but it was understandable considering the malevolent reality we faced outside our games. Usually Anne and the Aunties saw to it that as soon as we started enjoying ourselves, it was stopped, and a new rule would be made, forbidding us from playing that particular game. We would thus be forced to try and make up a new one within the boundaries of the rules that governed our lives, still knowing that eventually this new one would be banned also.

We were given daily doses of tranquillisers to "calm us down" and I think these took the edge off everything. That, plus the sheer monotony and sameness of our existence and the fact we weren't allowed off the property. Also the long punishment schedules which might go on for many months tended to make you lose your perspective and also your time span. Time tended to run into itself: we lost sight of any boundaries.

This is what a normal day was like for me when I was growing up. I will first of all describe our schedule in brief and then go into more detail about it. This was our weekday routine.

6:00 am Rise (summer 5:00 am). Wash dress and showers for either girls or boys on alternate days. Make beds.

6:30 - 7:30 am Hatha yoga

7:30 - 7:45 am Listen to Anne's doctrines on tape or to Baba Muktananda on tape

7:45 - 8:00 am Chanting mantras

8:00 - 8:15 am Meditation

8:15 - 8:30 am Running or physical exercises. Setting up the schoolroom. Getting dressed in smocks and jeans.

8:30 - 9:00 am Breakfast : fruit.

9:00 - 10:45 am Schoolwork

10:45 - 11:00 am Break

11:00 - 12:30 pm Schoolwork

12:30 - 1:30 pm Spaceball. Lunch: steamed vegetables and one or two pieces of fruit. Break or homework.

1:30 - 2:45 pm Schoolwork

2:45 - 3:00 pm Break

3:00 - 4:00 pm Schoolwork

4:00 - 5:00 pm Showers, cleaning rooms, packing up schoolroom.

5:00 - 5:20 pm Meditation

5:20 - 6:00 pm Tea (usually a bland vegetarian meal).

6:00 - 6:30 pm Spiritual reading

6:30 - 9:00 pm Homework

9:00 pm Latest bedtime for oldest children (up to 18 years).

I will now describe a typical day in my life.

6:00 am (5:00 am in summer). Rise.

You would always hear the alarm clock going off upstairs in the lounge room where Aunt Helen slept on guard against food thieves. She would come stumbling downstairs, guided by torchlight, and go first to the boys' bedroom and wake up Aunt Liz or Trish who slept in there. They would lurch out to the bathroom and get dressed.

Aunt Helen would light the gas light in the boys' room, and then go around checking the boys' beds to see who had wet them the night before. The poor children guilty of this would be led by the ear into the bathroom to have a belting administered by Aunt Trish or Liz. Then they would be shoved, still in their pyjamas, under a cold shower, no matter how freezing the weather outside.

Every morning I awoke to the sounds of children howling as they got their first belting for the day. Rare was the day that no-one wet the bed, at least until 1986, and even then the younger boys continued to do so on occasions.

The unfortunate child then had to wash his own sheets out during breakfast, and often had to miss lunch as well. The sheets were piled in a corner of the bathroom until breakfast time and they smelled horrible.

After this ritual Aunt Helen would come in and light the gas light in the girls' bedroom, for which she had to stand on Annette's bed. The mantle of the light always seemed to be broken. If it wasn't, it lit with a 'pouf' and sent out an eerie uncertain light.

We were nearly always already awake so we had those few minutes after the boys were awoken to enjoy bed for a bit longer. We had to leap into action once Helen had lit the light otherwise the bedclothes would be torn off us and then it would take a lot longer to make the bed. Beds had to be made very neatly, with nurse's corners. The older ones helped the little ones to do it as quickly as possible as we did not have much time.



Then the stretchers were folded and put in one corner and the trundle beds rolled back under the bigger ones, so that the floor was cleared. Usually at night the floor of the girls' room was completely covered with beds. We had to walk along the edges of the beds to get out to the toilet, which, by the way, was usually forbidden as was any movement out of bed at night, although in view of the number of wet beds they later had to be lax about that rule. Usually one of the Aunties would come downstairs at about ten pm., wake the boys up and take them to the toilet, in an attempt to forestall bed wetting. It didn't usually work.

After the beds were made we would file into the bathroom two by two, the girls going after the boys, to wash our faces, drink a glass or more of water, brush our teeth, and go to the toilet. In winter, we usually had to have a spoonful of cod liver oil, supervised by one of the Aunties.

Also, once a week, or more if it was considered that an individual had a weight problem, we were weighed and the results entered in a book to be communicated to Anne. She had a horror of fatness and was obsessed with body shape and weight. She always insisted that we girls were getting too fat, even though in some cases it was malnutrition rather than extra kilos that caused our bellies to stick out.

Weighing was a very serious business - particularly serious for us because if it was considered that we were putting on too much weight we would have our food rations cut down and that was a dreadful proposition - food being the most important thing in our lives. We girls viewed the scales with hatred. They made our miserable lives even worse.

Some of the girls also showered in the morning if there was time. We showered every two days in a rostered system, some in the morning and some at night. We were allowed a maximum of three minutes under the shower, and 'no washing down there'!. We were forbidden to look at our bodies under the shower - we were supposed to shower with our eyes shut - and also we were ordered not to look at anyone else. Particularly forbidden was girls coming into contact with boys. I do believe that I had not seen a naked male body - even in a book, as these too were heavily censored- until HSC Biology. In summer, when water was scarce, we often couldn't shower and had to wash from a bucket or else one bath would be filled and all of us had to use it. The water was pretty dark and scungy by the time it was the turn of the last few.

After this we had to be on the floor in position for hatha yoga by 6:25 to 6:30 at the latest. Hatha time for lasted one hour, during which we followed a prescribed order of four main asanas (positions) with intervening minor exercises and relaxation.

As we did yoga every day of our lives from a very young age, we were extremely supple. We eventually got given red towels which we had to lay out to do our yoga on; before that time we laid out blankets, which I remember used to slip around on the lino. We lay on the floor side by side, about half a metre between us. The next row was placed in between the others to form staggered rows. Each person had a specific place and one child, who lay perpendicular to the rest at the front, acted as supervisor and directed the pace of the exercise and kept the time.

Hatha finished at 7:20 - 7:25 and then the girls picked up their towels. Hatha yoga was often the only exercise we got for the day especially during the long periods of time when we were totally confined indoors. This happened when there were people in the vicinity or some suspected media or police interest. It could go on for many months. Or we could be confined simply as punishment.

While we were doing our yoga, most of the Aunties were upstairs having their breakfast. THEY got tea and toast. They also read a daily affirmation from a book called 'God Calling'. Sometimes one Auntie was left downstairs to keep an eye on us or would wash our clothes.

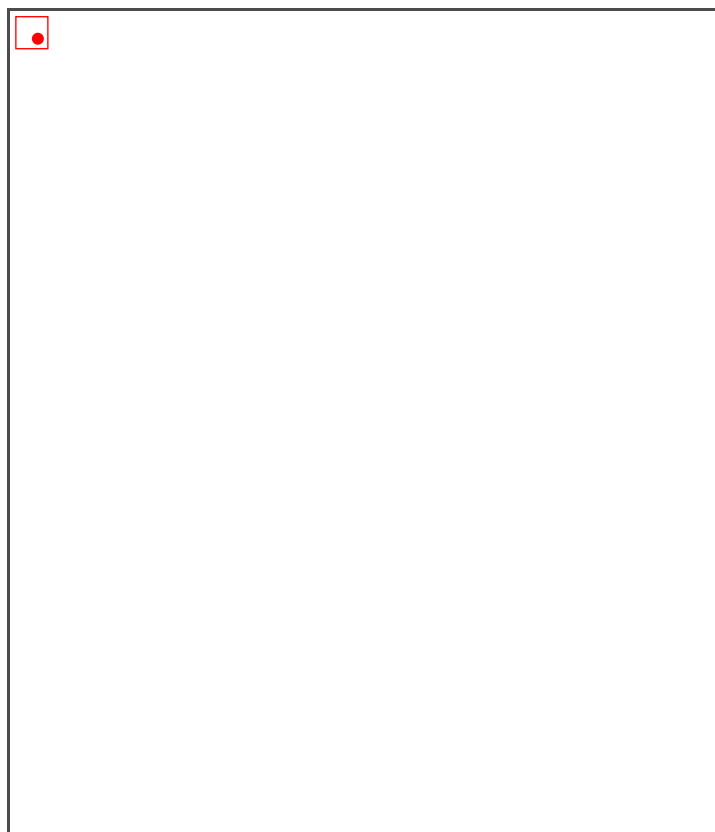
While there were times when we liked yoga, it was mostly very boring, and if we could fool

around or sleep instead, we would. However, an Aunty was usually supervising or listening upstairs in order to rush down and catch us out, so there was little escape; we usually had to do all of it. But, because we could hear their movements above us, generally we had plenty of time to get back into our positions before they got even half-way down the stairs. One person was often posted as a lookout and would stage-whisper "AUNTIES COMING!!!", when they heard movement above.

Aunty Liz and Aunty Wynne would sometimes try to catch us out and creep down the stairs or outside under the windows; if they did catch us there would be severe punishments. Aunty Trish knew we mucked around but unless she was in a particularly bad mood, as long as she didn't catch us at it, she didn't make it an issue. When we felt enthusiastic about hatha yoga, there was pleasure in doing it well, and we were proud to demonstrate how good we were to Anne on her visits. But, like children everywhere, our interest for doing something every day was hard to maintain.

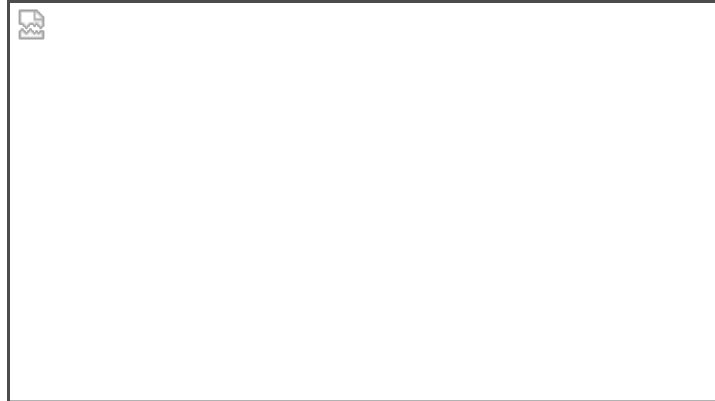
After yoga we all went into the larger boys' room, and the Aunties came downstairs. We sat cross-legged on the floor and the room was darkened. Incense was lit and we listened to a tape of Anne preaching for fifteen minutes. These tapes were recordings of her teachings to the disciples of the sect, on weekly Thursday evening darshans (a word meaning 'meeting with the Master'). All of these darshans were faithfully recorded, making up a large library to choose from, and for us to listen to and study. Anne spoke on various topics, such as Love and Brotherhood, about Kundalini (Divine Energy) and different forms of yoga, and about how best to think and perform and live one's life as a good disciple. Each tape was on a different topic like this, and we would listen to the same one over and over for about four weeks.

On alternate days, we listened to tapes of Baba Muktananda instead. We first met Baba in about 1978, when I was about eight years old, when he visited Melbourne to spend time teaching at his ashram in Fitzroy. I'm not sure how Anne heard of him or whether she'd met him before that but that year we girls were taken on a trip down to Melbourne to meet him. Later that year Anna Arrianne and myself went over to Hawaii and lived right by his house for a few months, seeing him every day.



**Arianne and me with our beloved guru, Baba Muktananda. The photo was taken at the Hawaiian beach house in which he was staying in 1978.**

He was an Indian Sanyassin/Swami, who had attained enlightenment and become a guru (teacher) in the Siddha Yoga tradition. We'd spent some time at his ashrams in Hawaii in 1978 and in America in the Catskill Mountains in 1979 and again in 1981.



**Anne's Catskill Mountains property is a forty-five minute drive from New York City. There are three houses, one hidden by the two shown in the foreground. It was here that Anne and Bill were arrested in 1993, before their extradition to Australia.**

Meeting Baba changed our lives. We absolutely loved him. He was kind, he gave us chocolate and little gifts. He lavished upon us his love and attention, he treated us as special and as human beings in our own right. He was the first person that had ever given us something unconditionally, and he completely won us over.

I thought he was marvellous. To be shown kindness by an adult was almost unheard of: we were so starved of affection that when he showed us some he had our devotion and love for ever. We revered and adored Baba for most of our childhood: he became a major influence in our lives. We studied many of his teachings and I was a convert to the spiritual path that he taught. We learnt in the ashram how to sing the Sanskrit chants and the Guru Gita, and we carried this on with great devotion when we went back to Australia. I accepted and worshipped Baba as a divine Master and self-realised being, and , unlike Anne, he never gave me any reason to doubt his authenticity.

Baba paid us children and Anne a lot of attention when we were with him. I remember when we were in America he would ride his golf-buggy from his ashram over to talk to us in the mornings at our house. He would give us rides in his golf-buggy and laugh, sing with us, and pinch our cheeks in affection. We also had many private 'darshans' with him, where he would talk and laugh with us and give us presents and lollies. He took a great interest in us children and I think Anne was jealous of his attentions to us. He spoke Hindi and had an English translator. Baba is one of few my good memories, and meeting him was, without doubt, the best thing that ever happened in my childhood.

Fifteen minutes of listening to Baba or Anne on tape was followed by fifteen minutes of chanting. We usually chanted Sanskrit mantras or parts of the Sri Guru Gita which is a song of reverence to the Guru - the conversation of Parvati with the god Shiva. After the chanting we meditated for another twenty to twenty-five minutes, depending on the time.

By 8:30 we were ready to set up the schoolroom. This involved carrying in trestle tables and folding chairs from outside and setting them up in the boys'



bedroom and taking our school bags out of a locked cupboard. Then, if we had done all this quickly enough and had enough time before school, we went out to the yard and did exercises for ten to fifteen minutes.

These consisted of jogging on the spot, leg raises, hopping, frog jumping and running around the periphery of the yard - probably about a hundred metres. Occasionally we were allowed to run up and down to the gate - also a distance of a hundred metres, but we had to have permission to leave the yard otherwise.

It was a serious offence if we were caught outside the yard. It was fenced with chicken wire and then barbed wire on top of that, to a height of six feet in some places, although there were sections that only had the wire up to three feet or so. There was a top yard and a bottom yard separated by a gate. In the bottom yard were some monkey bars which we were allowed to play on occasionally, although when we got older it was discouraged as 'unladylike'.

But more important than the fences in holding us in was our ignorance and fear of what lay out in the outside world. We didn't think of running away because we did not know enough about what there was to run to. We were taught to be frightened of everything outside the big brown gate that guarded the property from the evil outside world.

The top yard had a concrete area under the verandah which was often the only area we were allowed to play on as it was not visible from the waterside. The rest of the yard was covered with gravel, and there was a small hill on which stood a few trees. On one side, above the girls' bedroom window, was a cacti rock-garden which went up the side of the hill. This yard was the extent of our exploration of the outside world, except on the rare occasions of walking outside the property or up to the gate as a special treat bestowed by Anne. I knew every stone, every rock and the pattern of the bark on every tree in that yard.

I also knew the areas in the fence which could be jumped over to gain access to the rest of the property if, for example, a ball was lost over the fence. As I said, this was strictly forbidden, but if someone just quickly ran down and back up, they were usually not caught. It was a huge adrenaline rush, however, with the fear of the consequences of getting caught.

After this, at about 8:30 am, was breakfast. This was always three pieces of fruit (four for the boys) - usually an apple, orange and banana or pear. The Aunties had a deal to buy cases of 'seconds' from a local orchard. Often the fruit was rotten, as a new batch was brought up fortnightly. It was boring eating the same thing for breakfast every day of your life and fruit was not very filling or comforting on cold mornings. Still, we were grateful for it: we had learnt not to complain about our food.

Breakfast didn't take long and, as Aunt Helen rang the school bell for assembly at nine o'clock, we didn't dawdle. Assembly consisted of a roll-call. We lined up on the concrete outside the back door in order of age and trooped in one by one. If someone spoke or shuffled during assembly you got a slap on the spot from Aunt Helen's ruler. The edge of a ruler especially hurt the knuckles on a brisk morning and we would shake and blow on them to try and ease the pain.

School continued until 10:45 am. Usually it began with spelling - words and their meanings which had to be memorised from the day before. When we were young if anyone made a spelling mistake they were smacked over the hand with a ruler or occasionally hauled up before the front of the class, made to bend over the oil heater, had their pants pulled down and were belted with the metre ruler. Needless to say, I always did very well in spelling.

Andrea, then known as Teresa was pulled up and beaten for slow handwriting once, as she was not keeping up with the rest of us.

Our school life, under the instruction of Helen Buchanan, was rigid. Kai-Lama wasn't registered by the State Government as a school until 1984. Before

then, we weren't supposed to be there during the week. We were hidden when visitors or trades-people came to the house. As far as the authorities were concerned, we went to schools in Melbourne, so a lot of effort went into hiding us from visitors.

We concentrated on multiplication tables, spelling and writing. We had to learn an old-fashioned style of writing, similar to cursive script. We had books with three ruled lines to keep our writing to a certain size. We had to practice writing letters for pages and pages until they were perfect. It was a painstaking task trying to keep within these lines and we were rapped over the knuckles by Aunt Helen or Aunt Margot if we made a mistake.

We all did spelling, but after that we would be set tasks that were relevant to our age. We were all at different levels in maths and in other subjects. I have to thank the Aunties for the basis of my education. When we were young they drummed reading and writing and multiplication tables into us and it has stood me in good stead.

Despite everything else that happened they gave us one of the greatest gifts adults can bestow upon children - literacy and language skills. They taught us basic French and some primary school geography, that is where the countries were and what were their capitals. They could only really teach us to primary school level, except in the case of Maths where, under the weekend tuition of Leon Dawes, we were doing Year 10, 11 and 12 work at really young ages.

Uncle Leon taught Maths at a high school in Croydon during the week, and all weekend, every weekend he enthusiastically imparted to us a sophisticated knowledge and love of Mathematics. He believed in starting kids off at the deep end, so at an early age we were learning algebra and calculus.

Leon also taught us a smattering of German and chemistry and we learnt a little Latin from Aunt Trish. After Helen and Trish taught us all they could we were left much to our own devices. Leon brought up textbooks pinched from Croydon High and we were left to work at our own pace through these. It was a hit and miss education. Only a couple of us actually got much out of it - as self-education suits very few people.

In some subjects like Maths, we were precociously advanced, in others we were woefully inadequate. Even now, several years into a medical degree, I find some things difficult because there is an assumption of knowledge that I simply did not acquire. It may seem bizarre to some that I can get through a university course if this is so, but Medicine is a specialised science taught largely from scratch and I find the anomalies only cause me trouble on rare occasions. I suppose if I had chosen to study Arts or Politics or even Science, I would not have coped so well, as we knew little or nothing about these things.

At 10:45 am. we had a break for fifteen minutes. What we were allowed to do at this time depended on what was going on in the house. Often we were only allowed outside two at a time because of the risk of strangers seeing us from the lake and reporting to the authorities that there were children there during the week. The Aunties were paranoid about us being seen by outsiders.

I remember hot summer days during our breaks, how we would stand at the yard fence and gaze through the thick screen of trees at the water glinting in the sun. I would usually be sent out for a break with Megan and in later years, with Andrea who became my best friend. However, friendships were frowned upon, and you could be punished for getting too chummy.

At one time, during a punishment period that lasted twelve months, Andrea and I were

forbidden to speak to each other. Boys and girls were also restricted from playing together.

In the later years we had to play Spaceball in our breaks, although if there were a few of us outside together we would much rather play tiggy or poison ball or cricket. Sometimes, if there was no security risk, we were all allowed outside together or just the girls then the boys. Often we were only allowed outside together on weekends. Football was banned as being too 'unladylike' and too much of a risk to the windows. If we were restricted to the concrete area we played hopscotch, skipped or chased each other round and round the small area, which measured only about ten metres by five.

Certain things were forbidden outside. We were not allowed to raise our voices, in fact sometimes we were forbidden from talking at all. Other things that were forbidden were fighting, picking up sticks or stones, playing in the dirt, or omitting to pack away under the house any balls or playthings used, dropping any rubbish, boys playing near girls and so on.

Aunty Helen used to imitate a special bird whistle to call us in at the end of break. Much later, when we were teenagers, and began to object to being whistled at like dogs, she rang a bell. Lines, when in vogue as a punishment, had to be done during break times, and offenders were also kept in if they got spelling wrong, talked during school, had to go to the toilet outside break times, or were caught passing notes or looking at another child's work.

Then there was further school until 12:30 pm. After that, when Spaceball was fashionable with the Aunties, (that is, when Anne had made a particular fuss about it) we got a further ten minutes of it then.

Spaceball was a game approved of by Anne: in fact it was said that she invented it. It was supposed to 'unite body and soul' and make us feel really bright. Basically we stood in a circle and threw a ball around to each other in patterns as fast as we could. It came into our lives in about 1982 and after that we had to spend our breaks doing that. It got boring and I got annoyed with it. I used to try to get out of doing it as much as possible. Anne thought that it improved our mental capacity and told us that Israel University had devised something similar for their students.

If we didn't do Spaceball we went up to the lounge room and practised singing or speech. We were taught speech by Aunty Lilibet who came up on Wednesdays. She also taught us piano and singing. Anne wanted us to speak well, like well-bred English children, and we practised saying vowels so we wouldn't sound Australian.

Then there was lunch. Lunch was always steamed vegetables - carrots, pumpkin, parsnip, turnip, squash and potato - our favourite. We got a plate of this followed by a piece of fruit for dessert. Usually the vegetables were reasonable, although all our food was unsalted or flavoured in any way, apart from an oil and vinegar dressing.

However, if due to punishments, a lot of us were missing lunches that week, then the vegetables were reboiled day after day and served up again. As you can imagine, they ended up pretty tasteless and mushie. Generally lunch was the most filling and satisfying meal of the day so to miss it was a pain.

Depending on how long it took to eat lunch we had time to play until 1:30, usually fifteen to twenty minutes. From 1:30 to 2:45 pm. we did more school work, then another break until three, then another hour's school. At 4 pm. we packed up and dismantled the schoolroom. Between four and five we had to clean the rooms, have showers or baths and wash our clothes when we got older.

The rooms had to be spotless - there was often an inspection before tea. During an inspection we had to stand to attention at the foot of our beds while the Aunties checked how well they

were made, whether the carpet was spotless, whether the socks and underwear were neatly folded in geometric shapes in the drawers, checked that the shelves and objects on them had been dusted, whether the clothes in the cupboard were folded in identically-sized piles, whether the smocks were hung up according to their colour code.

We were very industrious at cleaning the rooms and we took great pride in presenting ourselves well at these inspections and tried to get praise from the Aunties and Anne and Bill. We girls used to go and help out the boys, as, like boys everywhere, they were not as good at getting things tidy.

From five to five thirty we did more meditation, sitting cross-legged in set positions on the lounge room floor. Then we had tea, which was usually salad, or yoghurt once a week, scrambled eggs once in a blue moon, rice occasionally, jelly or fruit salad in summer, followed by two or three biscuits, occasionally a handful of nuts and sultanas, and one or two pieces of fruit.

At 6 pm. we did spiritual reading: spending time reading from Indian Scriptures, for example the Gita (the conversation of the great warrior Arjuna with the god Krishna: it had lots of spiritual principles and advice for living), the Shastras or Upanishads or from various discourses about them. We also read from the works of Baba Muktananda (our favourite were books called 'Satsang with Baba', where disciples asked questions and he answered them with parables and advice - I had read these books over and over and knew them virtually by heart), Shri Chinmoy, Sri Ramakrishna, Sai Baba, Meher Baba, Rajneesh and others, and sometimes from the Bible or books discussing it.

One person would also read a passage out loud and then we would discuss it and get asked questions by the Aunties about it. This went on for about half an hour and then the younger ones got sent to bed and the older ones put up one of the trestle tables and did home-work.

Nine pm. was the latest bedtime for the oldest kids. Nine pm. was lights out time and any noise or movement after this was punishable by missing meals the next day.

Weekends were more relaxed. We got up at 7 am., did the Yoga and meditation routine for two hours, sometimes for longer, especially if Anne were there. We then did school work with Uncle Leon until 11 am when we had brunch, a special weekend treat, which was a bowl of muesli or porridge, fruit, two or three biscuits, a handful of nuts and sultanas and occasionally some cheese or an egg. Weekend food was much better than weekday food and it was terrible if you had to miss brunch as a punishment.

After brunch we did Maths with Leon with a few breaks until between six and seven pm when we had tea. We did not have homework on weekends and sometimes, in the later years, we were allowed to watch an educational video that Leon brought with him. Sometimes he would bring up something like 'Robin Hood' but nothing too racy was allowed. The Aunties had their fingers on the stop-button and they would 'fast-forward' through scenes of sex or violence.

After the television arrived we hardly ever watched it because it was considered a privilege and we always lost privileges as punishment. We got the video recorder in about 1980. On rare occasions Trish allowed us to watch the cricket as a treat. On Saturday nights, when we were younger, we sometimes played chess or draughts or Chinese checkers, supervised of course. When Anne and Bill were 'home', one of our favourite treats was watching projector Super Eight movies.

This was our routine and it never varied while I was Uptop. Every day was the same and totally predictable. The only time it changed was if Anne was there, or when we left Uptop on one of our rare trips overseas.



It is hard for normal people to imagine just how monotonous this routine was. Events other people take for granted as part of daily life: a day in the park, a trip to the zoo, visiting family or friends, a sudden decision to postpone a chore and do something different, simply did not happen. A trip to the movies, or an impromptu swim in the lake on a hot summer's evening, was out of the question. Day in, day out, year after year, for all the time we stayed up there, it remained the same. Only an extraordinary event, or a rare special dispensation from Anne, could change even an hour of our day.

Sometimes when Anne was up on weekends, she would stay until Monday and on those days we would have a different routine. Usually the whole day would be devoted to spiritual pursuits, and we would spend many hours studying the religious books, meditating and chanting. Usually these were wonderfully enjoyable days, but often too she would use the opportunity to punish us for wrongdoings that the Aunties had reported, and occasionally fly into her unpredictable rages or decide that we needed more rules or discipline and then write some more in the 'rule' book.

Anne Hamilton-Byrne believed in discipline absolutely. We believed we were her children. She was, we were told, Jesus Christ reincarnated. This was rarely explicitly said by her: it was more assumed by how she referred to herself and acted. Her religion was based on distorted perceptions of the Hindu notion of "karma": that you reap what you sow. Suffering as children was supposed not just to expiate the sins of this life, but also the sins of our past lives. Suffering built up our chances of salvation and redemption. Anne's religion practically called for child-abuse.

Because she travelled so much she left two books of instructions called 'Mummy's Rule Books'. These books listed penalties for infractions. They had entries such as: "If David rocks or sways during meditation, he is to be hit over the head with a chair" and rules about everything, even about how many hours of piano practice each child was to do. These were signed by Anne. She encouraged the Aunties to belt us.

The guiding principle of our rigid existence was discipline. Discipline was the word used to justify abuse. It was discipline that we had to agree with no matter what.

It was enforced in the early days with beltings and the deprivation of food by the missing of meals almost every day. Later this changed to public humiliation, lines to write, the missing of 'privileges' and less common but more severe beltings.

We often had to watch others being beaten. If we took our eyes away that would be interpreted as disapproval and if you disapproved that was a worse crime. Public beatings were held to flush out insubordinates. Anyone who got upset or refused to look or appeared to be disagreeing that the person should be punished, got beaten as well.

Punishments came in waves. Whatever Anne considered the best way of disciplining us was enforced until she changed her mind. So I remember harsh times and softer times.

We were always belted and kicked around from when we were very young with hands and feet or with anything they could find, but looking back I can see differences in the times and the ways we were punished. But always we were punished. Anne believed it was good for us. It fitted in with the karmic principles that the sect used to justify suffering and pain.

There were times when we were beaten almost every day. When we were little they belted us a lot. As we got older and bigger it wasn't so easy for the Aunties to beat us and so they tried other methods of punishment.

There was a particularly bad time which lasted for about four years, between 1976 and 1980. During this period Anne and Bill were overseas most of the time, and there were a lot of foster



children living with us. During these years we regularly suffered horrible beltings and missed meals almost every day.

I was absolutely terrified of the Aunties a lot of the time when we were young and so were the others. I remember one morning we were downstairs on the concrete doing exercises supervised by Auntie Helen, when Trish called down saying that she wanted to see David K. She probably wanted to give him a belting because he'd wet his bed which he did every night. But this morning David was so terrified when he heard her calling his name that he simply stood, rooted to the spot, and just lost control of his bowels. We all watched in horrified fascination and anticipation of what terrible trouble he would be in now, as pieces of shit dropped out of his pants and onto the concrete. Trish, very annoyed that he hadn't jumped to it, and interpreting his action as a new defiance, dragged him upstairs and gave him an even bigger belting than usual.

We were punished for not closing the lounge room door, for dirtying our smocks, for not practising our piano pieces in the right order, for untidy hand-writing, for not putting our shoes on fast enough, making a mess, talking when we were not supposed to, using forbidden words ('hate' was a word that was forbidden). It didn't have to be much: make your bed wrongly, look at one of the Aunties with what was called 'dumb insolence' (quite what that was I never found out although I always wanted to ask- but that would have been insolent in itself), speak during hatha or lights out, or a million other little things that infringed either the written laws, or an unwritten expectation of the place that children had in the scheme of things.

Megan Dawes once missed meals for a day because she was caught wearing odd socks. We weren't even allowed to go to the toilet until the designated recess time and so of course kids would wet their pants and be belted for that. One time we had a baby called Madeleine staying with us for a few weeks. She was locked in a cot all day with the sides up. She had not reached the walking stage and so couldn't get out of the cot and get to the toilet. However that didn't stop the Aunties. She still got belted when she wet or dirtied her nappy. I remember Trish ordering me to bathe Madeleine in a basin after she had soiled herself. The water had to be icy cold as a punishment and Trish smacked her after I bathed her. She was screaming and I had difficulty holding her still in the cold water.

We were often punished for rocking. We used to rock ourselves to sleep at night because we felt so miserable, sitting up on our haunches and swaying to and fro, or just rocking our head from side to side.. Often after a belting we would call out 'Mummy, Daddy' as we rocked to and fro, calling out to a Mummy and Daddy who were not there and did not care. When we were younger a few of us, myself included used to headbang as we rocked: it was a way of seeking comfort. If we were caught, we were punished with another belting, or being put outside on the concrete for the remainder of the night, or getting cold water tipped over us. Rocking was considered to be bad because , even when we were tiny children it was interpreted as a form of sexual gratification.

If we transgressed by word thought or deed any one of the thousands of petty little rules that governed our lives we were in trouble. There were so many rules that it was impossible to keep them all and also so many unfair reasons for punishment. Even if we tried our best we still couldn't keep out of trouble.

I was often taken to the bathroom and made to bend over and bare my bottom to be hit with a stick. A silence would descend over the house when one of us was getting a belting. We were supposed to continue on with what we were doing and ignore them, but always a silence fell. We waited for the screams. We waited to hear the sounds of the beating, muffled by the bathroom door, the thuds, the sounds of pleading, the terror in the voices of our "brothers and sisters".

One of my "sisters" had a theory about beltings: they only belt you until they hear you

screaming. So she would start yelling the moment it begun, or even before they had started! Many times I heard the Aunties say to her, 'stop your screaming, we haven't even begun yet.'

Maybe she was right. Certainly in the early years I would always break down and cry. I don't really know if it slowed them down or stopped them. How could I ever tell?

I never actually timed it to see if my sister's theory worked. As I got older I learnt to control myself. I remember deciding that, no matter how hard they hit me, I would not cry. It was pride again. I thought crying meant you lacked honour and courage and even with the most painful beltings, even the ones where you couldn't walk properly for days afterwards, I would try to hold out to the end.

Because, I thought, if you cry you are broken, and I was not going to let them break me. Soon I could often last a long belting without a single scream or tear. I was proud of that and perhaps that made things worse for me. I don't know. I knew that after they had finished with us, when they were exhausted from the energy it took to thrash us, then they would send us off to bed and in bed and only then, in the privacy I found there, I would cry into my pillow. But even then I tried to cry quietly. I didn't want them to know they had hurt me.

I thought if I held out during the beatings I would get a reputation for being tough and then they would realise that belting kids didn't work and maybe then they would stop it.

There were a few different kinds of belting and lots of different 'tools' for the beltings. Sometimes there were public beltings. During these we were all called up to the lounge room and made to sit on the couch. The black stool was brought over and the offender had to lie over it and pull down his or her pants.

The rest of us had to remain completely silent during a public belting. To murmur or cry or even to look away, they took to mean we were also insubordinate; that we took the victim's part against the adults. So we watched steadfastly while our brothers and sisters were thrashed and sobbing. We watched the black three-cornered cane come down against their skin again and again, we saw the welts rise.

We watched them trying to stifle their sobs, trying to be brave. And then, almost inevitably, we watched them break down, howling and screaming for mercy. The black three-cornered cane was made of reinforced plastic. It had flat sides, so whichever side hit you there was a corner against your flesh. It was a very painful thing, to be hit with that cane. It was hollow and made a whistling noise as it came down through the air.

They also used metre rulers to belt us. These were made from a plank of wood and they were a metre long and about an inch and a half wide. Uncle Leon used these a lot. They were a bit heavy for most of the Aunties except for Aunty Trish who also often used them. Perhaps she had stronger wrists than the others, and thus could wield them better. The Aunties all had their favourite weapons.

They would use anything they could find, bits of wood with nails and knobs, bamboo sticks (but these weren't much good because they tended to break), shoes, whips, basically anything handy that would hurt children.

I remember some of my worst beltings only because they were unjust. The ones I deserved, according to our perverted sense of justice, I usually forgot pretty quickly. Anyway it wouldn't be possible to remember every belting I had because for a while, it seemed, the rule was "a belting a day keeps evil away". When they were deciding on punishments for us, they used to laugh and repeat their joke about not being able to murder a bum.

When I was about six or seven years old I remember being dragged in front of the household

assembly by Anne and publicly scorned and humiliated for being a "goody-goody". It was probably true at that time. At that age I tried to keep out of people's way. A few of us tried to keep a low profile. But we even got into trouble for being too good. After that I gave up on that policy and whatever mischief was going on I'd be involved in it. And in time, they began to see me as a ring-leader. Along with Anna and Luke, I was always one of the first suspects in any trouble.

When someone had done something wrong they used to hold interrogation sessions. Leon Dawes told us that he had been a member of the Criminal Investigation Bureau and he used to fancy himself as good at extricating a confession out of us. If, for example, some food had been stolen but no-one was owning up to it, one child at a time would be called upstairs and be made to sit on a chair. A light would be shone in their face and Leon would say things like "You might as well make things easier on yourself and tell me all about it now, because we know you did it". He would act like he already knew about everything from questioning the others and would try to trick them. In retrospect, it was like a scene from a bad B-grade movie, but at the time it could be quite terrifying for the younger ones especially facing this on their own - this presence with the power to do anything to them. The younger ones would break down quite easily and say everything they could think of. I used to try to brazen it out and not say anything because the more you said the more he'd try to trick you into saying something that contradicted your previous story.

When I was about ten we were told by Anne that we were going to have a 'round table conference' for the entire household at which everyone would be allowed to air their views. Instead it turned into a dobbing session for the Aunties. Luke was reported to Anne for climbing over the yard fence to get a ball and he then received a light punishment, about twenty belts with Anne's heeled shoe to his bare backside.

I suppose I should have realised what kind of a session it was going to be - a total farce of democracy -but I didn't. I was excited by the idea that we might get a chance to complain about the system, and stupidly thought that this meant that she wanted to listen to our views.

After belting Luke, Anne asked if any of us wanted to speak. I was silly enough to make a comment. I forget what I complained about but it offended Anne because she started hitting me around the head with her hand and with her shoe and yelling that I was impertinent. Then she chased me to the girl's room, and hit me with the broom that had been left propped up in the hallway between the two rooms. She seemed out of control. She was using the head of the broom and the wood was digging into me. I thought then, as I often did during a bad belting, that she would kill me and that it would only be if she took mercy on me that I would be spared. I never knew when a beating would end and I didn't know then that there was an outside world that would have stopped her killing us.

When I got older, I tried to live by some principles and one of them was a kind of 'honour among thieves' code. I believed it was cowardly to inform on others, even though the adults tried to get us to spy on each other and 'dob' in anyone we suspected of planning mischief.

I thought "dobbing" was as low as anyone could get and I tried to make it a rule that I would not dob, no matter how bad things got. I used to be disgusted with those who did. Some of the children would blurt out anything as soon as it looked like the Aunties might be organising an inquisition.

I couldn't stand the yes-men, the people who were too scared to do anything but creep around like little mice dobbing on everyone, and especially on me, it seemed, to curry favour with the Aunties. Those who could never face a punishment on their own without turning in those who'd been in on it with them. I thought that these children were pathetic and spineless at the time. Still, it was understandable behaviour when you think about it in retrospect, considering the sick little world we lived in.

Probably the smartest thing would have been to sit tight and not make waves because then you weren't noticed. If anyone was noticed they paid for it. And the fear of being punished was so great, so all-consuming, that many would do anything to avoid it. And being punished alone was even worse. Because when you were punished alone then you were reviled by everyone, the other kids as well as the adults. Much better to have company for a punishment. At least then, there was someone to share the misery and the brutality.

When I was young I hated myself. I don't think I was unusual among the kids, I think we all hated ourselves for we had learnt well the lesson that children were inherently bad and evil.

We all used to hurt ourselves deliberately. If the adults weren't hurting us we would do it ourselves. We used to do things like all stand along the bathroom railing doing a Valsalva manoeuvre which involves holding your breath really hard and tensing up all your muscles until you went black in the face, fainted and fell over. It became a sort of macabre competition, to see who could last the longest. I don't know why we did that: we just had a need to do things like that.

We wanted to hurt ourselves because it didn't feel right unless we were being punished for something. It somehow felt better when we were hurting. In a strange sort of way that offered comfort. Maybe it was because the only form of human contact we knew was that of being hit. Even if it hurt it was interaction and attention and human touch: all the things that children need and crave if they are denied.

We couldn't reveal our emotions, or let off steam by becoming angry or having an argument or a tantrum, because that was forbidden. The only power we had was to turn our hurt onto ourselves. Kids would do things like pour cold water over themselves and some would, if they had a sore or something, pick it until it got really badly infected. I often used to burn myself or scratch myself and prick my arms with pins or scissors rubbed in dirt. I still have little scars all over my arms because of that practice.

I often fantasised about killing myself, drowning in the lake or poisoning myself with Dettol... It was only after we got out of the sect that I found out that many of the others had made much the same plans.

At puberty my self-hatred grew worse. When my breasts started to develop I thought it was proof that all that Anne had said about me being fat and ugly was true. All that she had said about my dirty mind; here it was happening to me. I was actually turning into some sort of sexual beast. I wanted to bind up my breasts and I actually envisaged cutting them off, but the thought of the blood finally stopped me. I would pray at night for God to make my breasts go away but, as usual, he took no notice of my pleas.

Why did we hate ourselves so much? Even when we were only little kids? I think it was because we believed so strongly in the lines they had on us - that we were inherently worthy of being hated. If you are told incessantly that you are horrible, that you are ugly, fat, evil, stupid and inferior, you start to believe it. As a child you know no other truth than that which you are taught by those around.

One of the strongest flavours of my childhood is a sense of sameness, broken now and again by fads. There were constants: we always seemed to be waiting for Anne and Bill to arrive; we always seemed to be in trouble for something, although the methods of punishment changed.

If one of the animals or one of us were sick - we were blamed. We were blamed for Stephen's epilepsy and for Cassandra's comatose spells - it was God punishing us for our bad behaviour. We waited to see whether Anne and Bill were coming back; if they were delayed for any reason, that was our fault too.



As Anne was often away we spent a lot of time waiting for her to come home. She would go to England and America for at least six months of every year and one time stayed away for eighteen months. Even when she and Bill were in the country they only visited Uptop intermittently at weekends.

She would ring us from England occasionally and about once a week when she was in the country. She rang and spoke to the Aunties much more often but it was a treat for us to be allowed a word with her. There was quite a protocol about phone calls. We would be lined up in order of age to say a few words.

One of them must have been on an extension because the drill was that you'd say "Hello Mummy, Hello Daddy" and they'd ask 'How are you children?'. We'd get in a quick reply and then have to pass it on to the next one. We usually got about thirty seconds each. Before we passed the phone on we were expected to say "I love you" to them.

Sometimes when she was in Australia, when we were older we would try to telephone her if there was some trouble. She usually stayed at Winberra so it was not too hard, apart from getting access to the phone and risking her wrath if she was not sympathetic to our version of events. The trouble was that Anne tended to believe whoever she spoke to first. So we would always try to get to her first before the Aunties told the story, as if she heard it from them she would not listen to our side of the story. It worked sometimes, as we got more adept at getting our own way when we got older.

For most of my early childhood, I remember being constantly hungry. We were starving and it was Anne's policy that we were. We were so hungry we ate dirt and leaves. We were so hungry we ate grass and scavenged in the rubbish bins. We were so hungry we ate the cats' and dogs' food, we ate bread and seed left out for the birds. We were so hungry we stole anything we could. Vitamin C capsules were considered by us as manna from Heaven.

Denial of food, colloquially known as 'missing meals' was a favoured punishment. When we were made to miss meals for a few days, we would often vomit on the second or third day. David would usually vomit by the evening of the first day. Children often threw up during Hatha yoga, but despite this we were made to continue with our ordinary routine, even though by the second or third day we were very weak. If we acted in a pathetic manner due to feeling weak, the Aunties punished us for malingering or would say that we were just trying to get sympathy from the other children.

I usually just vomited bile by the second day, but the Aunties, especially Liz Whitacker, had been known to poke through the vomit to make sure we hadn't hidden any stolen food or eaten any food we had saved. If any evidence of food was found we'd get even more punishment.

The years between 1976 and 1980, when I was about six to ten years old, was the years when this punishment by starvation was commonplace. It was very common to miss meals for up to three days for almost anything, for the most trivial of offences. There were many rules: it was impossible to know them all, and you often only found out that you had broken an alleged rule when you got punished for it. If you squeezed the toothpaste tube too hard, in the wrong way or didn't put the lid back on; if you got your smock dirty; if you were guilty of 'dumb insolence' (and I often was), you were punished with missing food.

The irony was that stealing food was the crime for which we were most often punished. It was a Catch-22 situation: we were so hungry we stole food and if we stole food we were made to miss more meals. In light of this miserable situation it wasn't surprising that most of us were obsessed with food.

Extraordinary measures were taken to prevent us stealing food. The kitchen cupboards were padlocked. There was a chain and padlock around the fridge, and an Auntie was delegated to



guard the kitchen at all times. Amazingly, despite these measures, we were sometimes successful in stealing food. But, more often than not, the ever-vigilant Aunties noticed immediately if anything was missing.

If we were lucky we'd be caught after we had devoured the booty, because it would be some fortification for the most usual punishment that followed which was to miss out on more meals. There would also be the obligatory belting and then would come the report to Anne, which meant taunts from her and more threats.

As well as trying to steal, we used to scavenge for what we could. The younger children would crawl under the dining table after the meal, supposedly to sweep up any mess, but their real purpose would be to eat whatever scraps or crumbs had fallen. Others of us would raid the rubbish bins and the compost bin. I only ate leaves and grass to assuage in some way the dreadful emptiness in my stomach. It was a desperation measure. Any edible plants and flowers were dealt with very quickly. I remember the nasturtiums in particular disappeared within minutes of flowering. We also ate the honeysuckle bush, and another type of grass that had a sweet tasting centre.

There was a rumour that one of the kids used to eat his own faeces. According to some, he also used to smear it on the toilet wall, but I never saw him doing that.

The stale and mouldy bread that the Aunties put out for the birds was highly prized. There was a bird platform protruding from the verandah and bits of bread and bird seed would drop from the platform onto the ground. We would slink around in the bottom-yard waiting for the moment when the Aunties would put out the bread, waiting for any crumbs that might inadvertently fall from the platform or be dropped by the birds. Once Jerome was caught eating the seed and he was made to eat birdseed for a day instead of his ordinary meals.

At one stage, when the Aunties were regularly making us miss meals for several days at a time, Leon Dawes became concerned. We were getting so skinny he thought we looked like concentration camp victims and he spoke to Anne about it. After that we started getting brunch on weekends, and the punishment of starvation for long periods of time became much rarer.

Often too the food we would get would not be very palatable. For example, despite all the cats in the house, we had a lot of mice in the house and often when we got muesli on the weekend there would be mouse-shit in it. We were not allowed to complain about this: we were simply told that we had to pick it out and put it on the side of the plate. Which reminds me of the one and only time when there was a mass refusal of food Uptop. Annabelle, one of the cats, was extremely fat, used to sleep on the top of the fridge and get high on the gas she inhaled. Often she would simply urinate down the back of the fridge, but would occasionally stagger down onto the bench and relieve herself there. Anyway one Saturday she urinated into the pot of porridge which was meant for us children. For some reason we were not given porridge on that day but it was heated up the next morning for brunch and we were served this porridge, the strong stench of which had filled the house. We guessed what had happened and, as one, wordlessly got up from the table with our bowls and put them on the bench in protest. Everyone except Stephen: we used to joke that he never even knew what he was eating, he wolfed it down so fast. Aunt Liz protested that we were imagining that the porridge had cat urine in it, but she was not game to taste it in front of us, and eventually gave us some bran instead. As I said, we generally were not in any position to be picky about our food.

Occasionally Anne would introduce fad diets for the adult sect members, for example a grape diet or an apple diet would be decreed where only this food would be allowed for a few weeks. She also put a lot of them on the Pritikin diet, although Anne never seemed to follow these stringent diets herself.

Anne fancied herself as a healer and we were subjected to the same drug-taking practises as

the adult members of The Family. She ordered huge amounts of medication for us. Most of the drugs we were given were unprescribed. Others had been prescribed by the doctors in the sect, not for us, but for the adult sect members. Many of these medications were given to us, and I know now how dangerous and inappropriate they were.

Anna was given Tegretol, a prescription anti-convulsant drug for epilepsy, supposedly to cure her of temper tantrums. It was more likely to have been administered for its sedative side-effects. Anne ordered this drug and Dr Christobel Wallace, a prominent sect member, compliantly prescribed it. This doctor still practises as a GP in Bayswater North. The Aunties started giving Anna Tegretol three times a day, as well as other drugs.

We regularly received major tranquillisers such as Anatenzol and Serepax. We were all given the benzodiazepines Valium and Mogadon on a daily basis. Apart from the sheer monotony of our daily lives, I blame the large doses of tranquillisers I received as a child for my inability to remember any significant dates. Large portions of my past are blurred, the chronology is unclear, and I experience none of the vividness I believe most people associate with childhood memories.

We would be given extra Mogadon if the adults thought we needed calming down. The Aunties would say, "Have a Moggy, you're feeling upset". We were also given Largactil, Stelazine and Tofranil. Often our food tasted strange and sometimes we would uncover little pieces of tablets or powder in it. When we questioned these findings, the Aunties would say, 'It's just something to calm you down'.

The climax of each child's drug-taking came in the sect practice known as 'going-through'. I describe my own experience of this in another chapter. However during this process, also known as "clearing", we were given LSD and a number of other hallucinogenic drugs. It was a state that was basically a sustained LSD trip. It was meant to clear your soul and take you to a higher plane of understanding, and was perhaps the key to Anne's spiritual influence.

I had my first 'go-through' at fourteen and afterwards I was given Largactil, Haloperidol and Diazepam by Anne to 'slow me down'. She also gave specific instructions for us to receive Valium each night for one month after going-through. One of the 'foster' girls, Mechalia, was also given Lithium because of her uneasy mental state. Mechalia was the adopted daughter of one of the sect members and was reputed to have behavioural problems.

For a period of about six years our daily vitamin dose was staggering. Each day we had to take twenty-eight yeast tablets, twelve kelp, two vitamin C, two white and one oily vitamin E, one desiccated liver and half a B-forte tablet. We took this size dose two and sometimes three times a day.

The end of the massive vitamin doses coincided with the death of a prominent sect member called Joan Villimek, who owned the Newhaven Private Psychiatric Hospital in Kew. We believe that she was supplying the money to buy them; as it was inconceivable that Anne dig into her own pocket to provide anything, other than the occasional bizarre gifts and dresses she bought for us.

Being ill brought few pay-offs for us children. It did not result in appropriate medication or extra emotional support and affection. In fact, it often led to punishment rather than sympathy. For instance, David, who had chronic asthma and a history of other allergies, was punished by the Aunties for coughing and wheezing all the time. He was never given bronchodilators such as Ventolin or steroids - the proper treatment for his condition. He was just told that he was a wheezer, as if this was something that was his fault. And if he woke the Aunties at night with his coughing or wheezing, they would often tip water over him and lock him outside the house for the rest of the night, or just belt him. Often he slept in the bathroom because of his 'noise'. He was even denied meals as a deterrent. Symptoms of any illness were attributed by Anne

and the Aunties as 'all in the mind' or 'attention-seeking' and if someone were really sick, they tended to just be ignored.

Homoeopathy remedies, prescribed by Anne, were given to us regularly for all sorts of reasons. Anne proclaimed herself an expert on this form of treatment and told us she had studied it for six years in Tibet. For the affliction of 'disobedience' we were given Stramonium, for 'shock' (a term meaning either physical or emotional upset) the treatment was Aconite, for 'thinking wrongly' Pulsatilla, for 'rocking at night' and for farting Nux Vomica. These homoeopathic medicines were administered in addition to our usual punishments for offences, and in addition to other drugs.

I never had a medical consultation with a doctor while taking these prescription drugs and, as far as I know, no doctor prescribed this medication for me.

Cassandra was our youngest 'sister', about seven or eight years younger than me. In some ways I saw Cassandra as a symbol of all the children Uptop; she was the most powerless member of our group and the tools used to control her were starvation and drugs.

She had lived at Winberra with Auntie Ilene initially and sometimes was brought Uptop to visit us. I remember her as a big, bouncing bright baby. She was a very young baby when Anne went over to England for about eighteen months. When Anne came back from overseas Cassandra had just started to say some words, but she stopped suddenly. She remained mute for another eight or so years.

We found out the reason for this much later. I remember Anne was combing my hair by the fireplace in the loungeroom, just before brunch on a winters day, when she told us this story. She told us how she had returned from England after her long absence and was staying at Winberra. One day, Cassandra was in her high-chair and Auntie Ilene was feeding her. Anne tried to put some food in Cassandra's mouth but Cassandra grabbed the spoon and started waving it around, sending food flying. This had made Anne furious. To punish Cassandra for this show of 'disobedience', Anne had taken her out of her high-chair and given her the biggest belting she had ever given anyone. She told us that she had 'really laid into her' and how she had to be stopped by one of the Aunties for fear that Cassandra would be killed. It was from this moment that Cassandra stopped talking and became withdrawn.

The Aunties were standing around listening to Anne telling this story and they were voicing their approval. "Good on you Anne, they need to be taught from an early age". I remember their chorus, how supportive they were of Anne as she described, almost boastfully, how she'd 'laid into' a two-year-old.

This episode remains clearly in my mind, because although, at the time, I was totally indoctrinated by Anne, I still thought this was a vile thing for anyone to be saying, to be bragging about. I could not agree with the Aunties that what Anne had done was right, just because it was her, with her exalted status as a Master, that had done it. Looking back, I am surprised she told us about it because she herself admitted that she might have overdone the punishment. Anne never usually admitted to mistakes, so this was a very rare occurrence.

In hindsight, I actually think she told us to reinforce upon everyone around her that day that her power was absolute and that her infamous temper was to be greatly respected and feared.

Cassandra's speech came back all of a sudden in about 1982 or 1983. I remember we were in America, all piled in Anne's car one day, going to the ashram for the evening darshan with Baba. Anne asked a question and someone answered, in a complete and clear sentence. I remember we all looked around to see who had said it, not recognising the voice. To our amazement it was Cassandra. Previously she had only said a word or two and had just cried instead of talking. From then on, she spoke normally.

A couple of years after Cassandra did begin talking, she started having fits.

During these attacks she would lose consciousness and neither touch nor pain would elicit a response. In an effort to assess the level of her unconsciousness the Aunties used to prick Cassandra with a pin , but she would not respond when she was in these states.

The Aunties knew there was something seriously wrong with Cassandra because they kept a special observations book for measurements of her pulse, blood pressure, response to pain and reflexes. They blamed us for Cassandra's fits but now I think they were due to her extremely poor diet and the extreme emotional deprivation to which she was subjected.

Because she had a round face, Anne decided she was fat and imposed a strict diet upon her. Cassandra ate even less than we did. She got one piece of fruit for breakfast, half a cup of vegetables for lunch, and then a very small salad, consisting of something like half a tomato, a lettuce leaf, a small piece of celery and a small piece of carrot, at night. Even if we were given something different for dinner, Cassandra always got salad. After dinner we might receive two biscuits, but Cassandra did not. Hers was a diet extremely low in even basic nutrients.

At one point Anne decided that Cassandra was too fat because her belly stuck out. Another stricter diet was imposed with the aim of reducing her weight to below three stone. I remember how Aunt Wynne and Aunt Liz gloated in the mornings when they weighed Cassandra's little stick-like body and then cut her food portions back even further. We needed special dispensation from Anne to give any food to Cassandra. I remember begging Anne to let her have some soup when we had some. But no, Anne had decided her weight had to stay under three stone until she was a certain height, which I think was about four feet. Peter Pan, one of our cats, weighed more than Cassandra. It seems impossible now but I know this to be true because we had to weigh the cats for worming and Peter Pan, a very large cat, was more than three stone.

Cassandra was always pale and lethargic. She crept around the house and had no energy to do anything. Sometimes she just lay down and couldn't get up, even when they screamed at her and beat her. The Aunties said this was because she was putting on an act to get sympathy. They said her comas were due to diabetes and the diet would cure them. They said Anne had placed her on a special diet because she was ill and if we broke the diet we'd be "following her coffin to the grave".

Sometimes, however, we took that risk because, looking at her, it seemed that she would probably die anyway. I think if Cassandra had not scavenged in the rubbish bins and eaten the birds' bread and seeds, she surely would have died, because that diet was not enough to sustain anyone for long.

Anne said Cassandra's fits were caused by us locking her in a cupboard once when she was young. Yet it was Anne who told us that if Cassandra cried continuously, we had to put her in a cupboard until she stopped. I remember Andrea, Susanne and me following these instructions, but not in a spirit of cruelty, more like troops just following orders. Maybe we were not so far from becoming honorary Aunties ourselves at times.

Later Anne began exaggerating the story, saying we had hung her in the cupboard, which is not true. I now feel bad about shutting Cassandra in the cupboard but at the time I didn't give it a second thought. But Anne got to me then and I believed for a long time that it was my fault that Cassandra had fits. It was just another example of how we were made to take the blame for anything bad that happened.

Now I think her fits were a result of the extreme emotional deprivation she suffered, combined with severe hypoglycaemia - low blood sugar - caused by physical starvation.



For a period between 1985 and 1986 Cassandra was made to sleep upstairs in Anne's bedroom by herself so that she couldn't get out at night and try to steal food. Aunty Helen slept across the door. When Cassandra wanted to go to the toilet she had to knock on the door to wake Helen in order to be let out.

When Anne was overseas I would beg and plead with her on the phone to let Cassandra have a little bit more food. I would tell her that Cassandra was starving. Anne would say that this was nonsense, that we only had to look at Cassandra's big fat stomach to realise she was well fed indeed. Cassandra's big stomach was due to malnutrition, not to being overweight. I told Anne about the syndrome of 'Kwashiorkor', which kids in the third world get due to malnutrition - it causes their stomachs to bloat. I looked the facts up in biology books and read it to Anne. I told her that the swelling was due to oedema due to protein deficiency. Anne completely refused to listen to me. "Oh no," she said, "she's just fat. She has always been fat." There was nothing that would change her mind.

In an attempt to cure Cassandra of her attacks, Anne and the Aunties began using imported drugs on her. The drugs came from Germany and were meant to make her grow. At the time I thought they were steroids because two of the other kids, Timothy and Arrianne, had been given a course of them once before. Dr Christobel Wallace and the other Aunties called these drugs Timothy and Arrianne were given steroids. Anne wanted Arrianne to grow because she was very small, but she never grew much. I think her growth in height was actually halted by the early doses of steroids given to her.

Cassandra was given her drugs with big syringes. The injections went into her bottom and they were very painful because she had almost no flesh on her bottom. We were called on to hold her down while she was injected and she used to scream. I remember her poor skinny little behind being covered with bruises.

Giving Cassandra the injections was quite a process, often taking between five and ten minutes. But the Aunties said the injections were to help Cassandra to get better and we believed them. We later found out, after we had left Uptop, that these injections were composed of homoeopathic mixtures of animal organs. She was given two of these mixtures, one called Neycalm, the other Neychondrim. The concoctions included thymus gland, hypophyseal gland, spinal medulla, adrenal gland, testis, liver, pancreas, fat, and kidney, and one of them was designed to treat joint pain, the other for hyper sexuality of children. I'm not sure how Anne thought this would help Cassandra to grow: perhaps she thought, in her disordered way, that all Cassandra's problems were of a sexual nature. Needless to say, these horrible injections had no effect on her lack of growth.

We believed them when they said if we gave extra food to Cassandra it could kill her. We believed them when they said we would 'follow her coffin to the grave' if we fed her anything above the diet she was getting.

Cassandra is one of the main reasons I eventually talked to the police when I left Uptop. I regularly had nightmares about her tiny wasted body, so when I got a chance to help her, I did.

Between 1978 and 1980, and maybe a little earlier, there was some media attention focussed on the sect and particularly on Uptop. People in the sect were always paranoid about outsiders. The motto of the sect 'Unseen, Unheard, Unknown' illustrates this, but around this time things were very bad.

During 1980 there was a fair bit of media attention over the Kim Halm case. Kim Halm was the daughter of sect people, though when her father left the sect he lost trace of her and tried for three years to track her down. The Federal Police were involved in the search for Kim Halm and eventually they came sniffing around Uptop. This, as well as the media attention given to the case, made life even worse for us.



Another former sect member named George Ellis had gone to the newspapers. He had been one of our 'Uncles' in the early days at Uptop, before things got too bad. I remember, however, that none of us liked him very much. He used to like lining the girls up against Anne's big red bed in the lounge room, pulling down our underwear and slapping our bare backsides with his hands. He was thought to be Arrianne's father and he was making waves about getting her back. Due to all this we weren't allowed outside at all for a few months.

Things were very tense. Imagine living in a small house with up to twenty-two children in it and none of them ever even being able to go outside to play. Our only exercise during that period consisted of daily Hatha yoga, some exercises in the girl's room at lunchtime and pacing up and down the small downstairs hallway. I remember pressing my nose against the fly-screen of the downstairs outside door after one of the Aunties told me to "get some fresh air". We all started pacing around this time and it's something I still do when I am feeling stressed.

Uptop was not registered as a school until 1984 and the Aunties convinced us that we would get into horrible trouble if the police found out so we had to stay inside a lot and be very quiet during the week.

I believed that if the police caught us they would put us in a big bag and beat us. The Aunties had made us terrified of the police and convinced us that if the police did come, we would be the ones who got into trouble; the ones to be taken away and beaten in dark prison cells. We were frightened of all strangers, but particularly of police. So when anyone came to Up-Top we were silent, we were completely compliant with them about being quiet; we thought silence and hiding in the hole was better than getting caught by the police.

I think Liz Whitacker originally dreamed up the idea of stuffing us into the hole at the back of the boy's bedroom.. But of course, it was Anne who had originally directed that we be hidden. At Anne's direction, the Aunties held drill practises, so that at the sound of a warning whistle or bell, we moved quickly into our positions.

We got it down to a fine art and were able pack up the school room, cover up the piles of books with blankets and all get into the hole within two or three minutes. The hole was located in a pump-room in which was a pump that was used to pump water from the lake up to the house. The pump-room led off from a corner of the boy's bedroom. In the wall of the pump-room was a hole about two feet by two feet wide and two feet tall. This led into a small area under the house. It had a dirt floor and the sides were banks of earth. It was really just a cavity under the house, where the house had been built into a hill. The hole was covered with a picture; I remember it, a little wooden framed picture with boats on it. When visitors, tradesmen or police came we had to remove the picture and climb into this area under the house.

The area was very small, about one metre by about two metres wide. If you looked in there from the door at the other end of the area under the house, all you would have seen was a stretcher and some rubbish piled up. The police, or anyone else looking in, would not have seen the place beyond the stretcher where we hid. No-one would have ever thought to look behind the picture in the pump-room if they were searching the house.

The small area was rocky and dusty, full of cob-webs and spiders. It was dark and scary. When an outsider came we all had to pile in there as fast as possible, and it was a dark and suffocating place especially if you were unlucky enough to be on the bottom of the pile. Once in there, we were not allowed to make any noise. If we did, we would be in serious trouble. But we did not need threats to keep us quiet: our terror of the police was more than enough.

If we were in bed when the police arrived, we were woken, made to straighten our bed covers, push in the trundle beds, fold up the stretcher beds and put them in cupboards. An Aunty usually helped the boys, who were slow at waking, and then we would have to change into tracksuits if there was time.

If there was no time, we had to go straight to the pump-room in our pyjamas and climb into the dark hole, making not a single noise. We had to do this while the Aunties were entertaining the police often with cups of tea.

If they arrived during the day while we were in the school room, we had to put down the trestle tables and put the books in boxes and cover them up with blankets. We had to make it look like the bedroom of a holiday house, to make it look like we weren't there and then we had to climb into the hole in the pump-room wall, one on top of the other and lay there, very still, not making any noise. Once the police had left, we were allowed out.

At that time, there were quite a few visits by the police, so we had lots of practises. When the police visits died down so did the drill sessions. We met the police once on one of their visits. I don't know how it happened that we weren't hidden, but I suppose it must have been because it was during the school holidays or on a weekend. It must have been outside school times. We were supposed to have been going outside to schools in Melbourne and had been told to tell anyone who asked us what schools we went to. I remember two or three policemen visiting and I think one of them was in uniform.

We were called upstairs for the interview and all sat in the lounge-room opposite and as far away as possible from the coppers sitting on the armchairs. I remember Stephen burying his head in a cushion because he was so terrified. He relaxed a bit when the policeman showed him his digital watch and Stephen, who has always loved gadgets, was very interested. Auntie Wynn and Liz Whitacker were there I think.

The police asked us if we were happy with our treatment and whether we were well-fed. We answered "yes" to all their questions. We were asked our names, ages and what schools we attended. The girls all gave Camberwell Girls' Grammar School and the boys said Kingswood College. Stephen, was the only exception - he said he went to Xavier.

We all looked up because we knew Stephen was not supposed to say that, but the Aunties covered up for him, saying that because he was a bit "different" he went to a different school.

We had all been drilled in the answers we were to give. We would never have imagined saying anything other than what they told us. We were to lie to outsiders, telling them that we only came to Uptop on the weekends. We complied totally. For a start we thought the world was a terrible place - our own experience was proof- and we'd been told the police were the worst people in the world and would take us away and torture us. We didn't want anything to do with them and we certainly wouldn't have volunteered any additional information.

All we wanted was for them to go away and leave us to the tender mercies of Uptop and the Aunties. I can only assume the Police didn't check out the details we gave them because nothing happened.

I can never really forgive those two young coppers who interviewed us that day. If they had been a little more observant, if they had listened a little harder or probed a little more, maybe we would have been saved from many more years Uptop.

As I said before, a few times we went, in groups, on trips out of the country with Anne. I travelled to England three times, America once and Hawaii once, while I lived at Uptop. I still cannot work out why Anne took us overseas. Sure, it was much more fun and more exciting than the life Uptop: in America and Hawaii we even got to spend some time with Baba Muktananda. But, from memories of the rest of her performance and attitude towards us, it seems unlikely that she was spending money to take us overseas just so that we could have fun, or spend time with Baba.

I don't quite understand either why or how Anne got involved with Baba. He certainly paid her

a lot of attention and treated her with respect. In the end she ended up causing a lot of trouble in the ashram, and several of Baba's close disciples defected to the Family, including two prominent swamis of Baba. So maybe she was in it because she saw an opportunity to establish another sphere of influence. I was present when Swami Tajomayananda got initiated by Anne into the family, and, knowing what a wonderful person he was, because he had come to stay at Eildon with us for a while before that, I am still puzzled by why he would want to join a sect where everyone was so miserable, when it seemed to me that around Baba everyone was so happy.

Whatever Anne's reasons for taking us overseas, life there was much better than that Uptop. We still lived a fairly isolated existence, but when we were in America we had trips every day to Baba's ashram down the road, and interacted with the other disciples in the evening activities at the ashram. We also saw Baba at a private darshan about once a week, when he could come down to our house to see us.

At these darshans Baba was very good to us. In fact, in retrospect, it was remarkable that he gave us so much time and attention because at that time he was very famous and had many thousands of devotees worldwide, and lots of demands for his time and attention. Of course at the time we did not realise that and merely lapped up his affection and enjoyed the fun we had with him. He was very fond of us and would talk and laugh with us and give us chocolates and little gifts. We worshipped and adored him - we wanted nothing better than to stay at his feet forever. Once he asked us if we wanted to leave Anne and go to Ganeshpuri and stay with him in his ashram. We all enthusiastically said yes, and were later belted and abused by Anne for being so disloyal. I am not sure if he ever knew or guessed what our life was like: he certainly never criticised Anne and treated her with a lot of respect apart from occasionally playing practical jokes on her, much to our (stifled) amusement.

In America and England we also had nicer food and occasionally went for drives in the countryside or walks off the property. Not only that, it felt good not to have to feel that we were in hiding from the outside world. I remember when we were in England playing on one of the lawns at Broom Farm, and a plane flew overhead, being surprised that we didn't have to run inside, as we would have done Uptop.

Despite this generally better lifestyle, America was also a time of emotional ups and downs for me. Although Anne let us have more fun and privileges and spent a lot more time with us, she also could be very cruel, not physically so much as mentally. For example, she knew that we loved Baba deeply and so held over us the power that she had to stop us seeing him.

One time Andrea and I wrote a poem to Baba, expressing our devotion to him as disciples, and gave it to him at our private darshan. Anne punished us for doing this behind her back. We received a belting from Bill in front of a lot of the sect members. Before we had our belting they stood around and mocked Baba in front of us. Far more, however, than the injustice of the belting, I remember my anger at the fact that they were being rude about Baba, my guru, behind his back. I knew the Guru Gita by heart by then, and I remember finding consolation in the verse that said that those who slander the Guru's name will burn in hell 'so long as the sun and the moon remain' and be born in hell in a demon's form, to thirst for water unceasingly. I could not understand how they could be so hypocritical, go and receive Baba's darshan and then make fun at him behind his back. To me, there could be no such in between: the grace and love of Baba permeated my whole life. I could not worship him one moment and forget him in the next.

Also while we were in America, Anne initiated a system where a chart was kept on the lounge room wall with a list of all our names and the Aunties had to enter on it all the alleged misdemeanours that we children had got up to during that day. Anne would review this with the Aunties every night (which was generally the only time of the day that we would see her) and

then hand out the punishments to us: usually missing seeing Baba that night, or a belting, or lines.

When we went back to Eildon after this American trip where we had so much interaction with Baba, all of us, but in particular Andrea and I, were filled with devotion to him. He offered us spiritual solace, a refuge from the harsh reality of the world in which we lived. By meditation and chanting and repeating the mantra we could transcend what was going on around us, and find happiness in worshipping God and a guru. We built a mini-'ashram' in the yard and set up altars to Baba everywhere. We wanted badly to do guruseva for Baba and so built this 'ashram' (in reality only a cleared corner of our yard) with great devotion for him, clearing away every leaf and stone and surrounding the boundaries with small white pebbles. We called ourselves by the spiritual names that he had given us. We meditated intensely on him and chanted at every opportunity we got, not just in the allotted times in the day that were designated for such activities. Soon, however, our 'ashram' was disbanded and we were forbidden from these activities apart from in the context of our daily routine. It seems that we had been getting far too much joy from our faith and devotion in Baba. Perhaps Anne was getting jealous.

## Chapter 9 MY MOTHER, MY MASTER

Among the many things that Anne told us children was that she was a direct descendant of the French Royal Family. She also said we were indirect descendants of Jesus Christ because, she reasoned, she and thus us as her children, were from the House of David, which was the House of Jesus. The lineage was all set out in the front of the Bible. She told us that we weren't allowed to tell anyone about this, because royalty were no longer popular and we "might get our heads cut off"!

She said we should be very proud of this and it was no wonder we had a Guru in the family and that one day, one of us would be a Guru too. She was constantly telling us that when the right moment came, one of us would be chosen, and that she was always watching us to see which of us was displaying the characteristics of spirituality and potential self-realisation.

There is no evidence to support any of Anne's beliefs about her heritage. There is no evidence that these stories were anything but fantastic delusions. The Royal blood was, she said, on her mother's side and her mother was a small woman with red hair. I think my red hair was what made me special to Anne, because of her mother.

She said that her father was an inventor and was good friends with an "English explorer" - "a fellow who went over to Arabia and lived with the natives and his name was... Laurence of Arabia." As a child she said she had lived in a great mansion with massive grounds. Her father was supposed to have a great castle in Germany and we were all going to visit Grandad one day in his castle. She never spoke much about her mother, except about her hair and the fact that she was Scottish and came from the Hamilton clan. She hung the house of Hamilton coat of arms on the wall at Winberra.

The facts about Anne are hard to come by. We knew nothing more about her than these lies. It was only later that I found out so much. I cannot begin to describe how bizarre and surreal it feels when you read about the life of your own mother and the truth about your own origins in a newspaper.

I cannot also adequately describe how bitter and sad I was that she hadn't told us, that I had to learn these things from the media, and not from the woman I had loved as my mother. There was an immense sense of betrayal at how I had been duped for so long.

All of this information came to me after I left the sect - while I was part of it, I knew very little. I discovered later through researching newspapers that stories had been written about the sect



in the Melbourne 'Age' as early as 1983.

In fact the sect had come to the attention of the journalist who wrote the articles purely accidentally long before that because he owned land in the Dandenongs opposite Dr John Mackay, a sect psychiatrist. The journalist, David Elias, first realised there was something strange going on when his daughter had been playing with Helen, Dr Mackay's daughter. Elias's daughter said Helen Mackay "didn't just have one mummy, she had lots".

Gradually Elias became more interested in the sect's activities and in 1979, while he was writing a series on alternative religions, he tried to write something on the Family, he was warned off by Dr Raynor Johnson, who threatened to sue the paper. Dr Johnson was at the time a very influential man. He was the retired head of Melbourne University's Queen's College and was a world respected authority on religion. He was also co-founder with Anne of The Family.

After 'The Age' was threatened with a writ it took another four years before Elias could come up with anything else on the Family because of the incredible secrecy that surrounded them.

The information on Anne Hamilton-Byrne he unearthed came from months of digging. He learned that the woman we knew as Anne Hamilton-Byrne was born Evelyn Grace Victoria Edwards in Sale, Victoria. She was one of seven children born to a railway engine cleaner Ralph Vernon Edwards and his English second wife Florence Louise.

Apparently young Evelyn's mother was known for setting fire to her own curly red hair and for having an interest in psychic phenomenon and talking to the dead. Subsequently other journalists have reported that Anne's mother was mentally ill and died alone in a mental asylum. Her aunts in England were institutionalised and her sister suffered from psychiatric problems as well.

Newspapers have reported that Anne grew up in a large family. After her mother was committed to Ararat Mental Asylum, Anne spent some of her childhood in the Old Brighton Orphanage.

Although she claims to have gone to Firbank Church of England Grammar School, school records show she began at grade one at Sunshine Primary School on February 7, 1929 and that she had come there from the orphanage.

She has said she was handicapped at school but fellow school pupils do not recall any callipers. In fact according to newspaper reports they only remember "an overweight child whose nickname was 'Puddy'."

She has claimed to have had qualifications in psychiatric nursing, homoeopathy, physiotherapy and a pilot's licence. She also said she had been a famous opera singer, winning the Sun Aria awards, and later studying with Dame Joan Hammond and Dame Joan Sutherland. Journalists who have searched the records find no evidence of any of those qualifications. She also has a number of aliases including Fiona Macdonald, Anne Hamilton, and Michelle Sutherland.

In 1941 she married an twenty four year old RAAF policeman named Harris and had her daughter Judith (who later called herself Natasha). Harris was killed in a car accident in 1955. Newspapers report, though with no substantiation, that Harris's death was predicted to Anne by a Tibetan guru she had earlier met. As with anything connected to Anne, it's hard to know the truth.

Apparently after that Anne disappeared for four years. Some reports say she spent several years in Geelong where she gave yoga lessons for \$1 a head in a church hall, then set herself up as a therapist of some sort in Melbourne. It is recorded that in 1959 she enrolled in a yoga



class in Melbourne.

She called herself Anne Harris but registered her name as Anne Hamilton. She was asked to leave the class after putting a 'spell' on a fellow student. In the sixties she married a former Navy officer named Michael Riley and went to live in the Dandenong Ranges, just outside Melbourne.

The marriage didn't last long. But it was useful to Anne in other ways. Riley worked as Dr Raynor Johnson's gardener in those days and this may have been how Anne came to know the man with whom she went on to co-found The Family.

A group formed around Raynor Johnson and Anne. Dr Johnson was known within the group as the John the Baptist figure to Anne's Christ. In the study of his big old house in the hills, they met on Thursdays and Sundays and the talk would be on the principles of yoga and meditation. Finally this group became more formal and developed into the beginning of The Family. They built a place called the Santiniketan Lodge. The Lodge was named after the school founded by the Indian mystic and poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Bill Byrne was an earth-moving contractor from Traralgon in Victoria. In 1968 he took his son Michael to the Newhaven Psychiatric hospital for treatment. This was the hospital that was owned by one of the sect members and staffed in part by psychiatrists, doctors and nurses who were sect members. It didn't take long for Bill to come under Anne's spell and he soon left his wife and moved in with Anne. They married in 1978. Bill had been a local government councillor and was still commuting from Gippsland when the first children were arriving at Winberra.

It has been suggested that Anne would have had no power without a syringe. She claimed a lot of knowledge of medical things. She said she had been the matron of a hospital but there is no evidence she ever did nursing. I can't emphasise the importance of nursing in the sect enough. It was critical to the way she viewed the Aunties and, it was what she planned for the girls' future profession. She said nursing was one of the ideal occupations because it was a form of 'selfless service' that led to spiritual advancement. We knew that on their weeks off from Uptop the Aunties were either training to be nurses or practised as nurses. Several of the Aunties nursed Lord Casey, a former Governor-General of Australia. Rumour has it that he made a significant donation to the sect.

I have mentioned earlier the alarming drug dependency of the sect and how we were constantly administered prescription drugs. There was always a lot of medical paraphernalia around Uptop: syringes, tablets, gauges and more. I remember one whole cupboard containing hundreds of bottles of homoeopathic medicines. This cupboard was in the downstairs girls' room, and one summer we broke in and stole lots of this homoeopathy, because the pills were sugar-coated and tasted like lollies.

When I was a child, I remember thinking Anne was very beautiful, thinking that we had a beautiful young mother. If ever we asked her how old she was she would always say she was twenty-one. We tended to believe her because so much about her seemed magical.

As a child I didn't question her power over aging, and because she had facial surgery regularly, she never seemed to age. She usually looked about twenty years younger than she was and still does. I suppose the fact that we were all supposed to be her biological children and that Natasha was an adult, should have given us a clue to her age, but as a child, you don't look for clues. You just believe what your mother tells you. I know it doesn't make any sense, but we never questioned her.

Even though she was usually physically absent from Uptop, her presence in our lives was all-pervasive. There were portrait photos of her all around the house, wherever you were her eyes

seemed to follow you. There were little altars to her in the schoolroom and in the lounge room. We used to spend a large part of our day thinking about her, we prayed to her at night before going to bed, we wrote letters to her telling her our dreams and we believed that she knew our thoughts and was aware of what we were doing even before we actually did it. And of course, the books in which she wrote the rules became the Bible for our existence. We waited for a phonecall or a letter from her like farmers wait for the rain in a drought. If she sent us a letter it was read and reread, dissected for hidden messages and then treasured as almost a sacred message. Similarly we hung out for her to send us a message that she loved us when she rang on the phone. The whole house would hush in expectation whenever the telephone rang, hoping that it would be her, and that she would say that she was coming to visit us or that she planned to return soon from overseas.

In those days, she had blonde, shoulder-length hair, and often wore a blonde wig, because her natural hairline was receding (she said her huge forehead denoted spirituality and wisdom). She was a fairly thick set woman and not very tall, about 5' 2", and was curvaceous with a big bust. Later we discovered she went to Hawaii for lipo-suction and reductive surgery every year. It seems strange, but it was something she told us as we got older. She'd drop hints. She would let slip a remark about needing to have her breasts reduced again, something like "It is nearly time to get my tits done again." Anne could often be incredibly crude for a woman who presented herself as extremely refined.

Anne was extremely vain. Appearance was all in The Family. Ugly children were treated appallingly, as if they were less worthy. According to ex-sect members, people were even screened by Anne on the basis of their looks when they were trying to get into the sect.

As for us, Anne wanted people to believe we were her children, and she thought she was beautiful, so it was a certainty that she screened us on our looks, or at least screened our parents. We were to be the ones who would carry on the work of the sect - we were a direct reflection on her - so she was intimately concerned about our appearances. She used to talk a lot about "breeding" and talk about us being from the "right stock".

But sometimes nature plays games. Luke, one of my 'brothers', was an absolutely gorgeous child with a cherubic face and hair. But when he reached puberty he became pimply and his hair got all thin and straggly. He's not a bad looking adult but nothing compared to what he was like as a child. On reaching puberty, Anne's treatment of him changed immediately and he went from being the favourite to being reviled.

I remember Anne wore a lot of blue. It was her favourite colour. She thought it brought out her eyes. She wore expensive clothes, skirts and blouses, flowing stuff. She had an extraordinary number of clothes. The bedroom she used at Uptop was crammed with her outfits, suits and shoes and jewellery, diamond and ruby and sapphire rings, ropes of pearls and thick gold chains. She never let us touch her jewellery but it was clearly expensive - she had a taste for the best things in life.

Her clothes were the finest money could buy, bought on tremendous shopping sprees at Harrods and other exclusive stores in London and Paris. She also bought some exquisite dresses for us when we were little, identical outfits from Banbury Cross. We had to wear these when she took us to meet people she wanted to impress.

When I was older and visited Broom Farm for a short while, a Tudor mansion she owned in England, there was a room full of expensive linen and lace, a whole room of it folded away in obsessive order. Never used, just there, waiting for the right time. The floors in this mansion were covered with magnificent Persian carpets, the curtains were of the richest velvet, the walls hung with original paintings and a lot of the furniture and ornaments were antique.

The huge table in the sumptuous dining room was laid with real silver cutlery, she had pure silk

sheets on her bed, her perfume was by Yves St Laurent. She had a beautiful reception room at Broom with chandeliers, cabinets full of crystal glasses and antiques and a huge antique grand piano. One part of the house at Broom was particularly grand and richly decorated. The rooms in this part were each richly carpeted and curtained in a particular colour. There was a 'green room', a 'blue room' and a 'red room'. We were only allowed in this part of the house on express invitation from Anne.

The only 'playthings' she bought for us children were little china figurines. She would have them spread out on the bed and we'd be allowed to go and see them and then she would order us to put them back in their boxes and not touch them until she said to.

Anne was always a very rich woman who never spared herself anything. Lately though, she has been crying poor. But judging by all the real estate she owns throughout the world, I estimate she is worth at least A\$150 million. Broom Farm, her three-storey mansion and hundred acres or so of farmland in Langton Green, Kent, England must be worth several million alone. She owns at least one more house in England in Crowborough, and, I think, another in Red Hill. She, or her companies, Fafette and Audette, owns at least a dozen houses in Ferny Creek and another mansion in Olinda. She and Bill have or did have a few years ago, a huge property just outside Traralgon. In the United States, there is another large property of hers in the Catskill Mountains outside New York, America with three houses on it. And of course there was Uptop, five acres of waterfront land in a popular holiday area.

She enjoyed the trappings of her wealth and her power. She more than enjoyed them - they were essential to her.

HeHe He One day, in fact it was just after Bill's explosive beating of Andrea, Anne took all the girls downstairs to the girls' room and told us a thing or two about ourselves. I would have been about twelve or thirteen at the time and Anne was attempting to explain Bill's behaviour.

She proceeded to talk to us in a crude and almost incomprehensible manner.

She said that life all came down to gynaecology. She said she'd been a nurse and she knew a thing or two about loose women. She talked about how she had seen when she was a matron prostitutes "strung up with their legs apart" and great cancers coming out of their genitals "because they had been such sluts"; she said she'd "smelled enough fannies in her time to know a slut when she met one".

I remember feeling stunned at the time. She could be absolutely revolting at times and this was one of them. But also I remember being puzzled about what she was trying to convey and confused as to how this tirade had explained anything. Although she had said that she was going to explain his outburst, she didn't relate at all to the incident of the belting, nor did she try to excuse him or apologise for him. We failed to see how it had any relevance to Bill being angry with us, but probably to her distorted way of thinking, it all made perfect sense.

She always seemed to be on about sex and yet physically she was a fairly cold person. Even when we were tiny children, the girls would get into trouble for allegedly 'wagging the hips' in a provocative manner while walking when there were men in the house. Often, if there was a male guest in the house she made us stay in our rooms while they went to the toilet. We girls were often accused by Anne of 'staring' at men if we were caught looking directly at them, because it was somehow supposed to be perverted. She would punish us for that and make out that we were sluts if she caught us, or they reported it. She always used to accuse us of having it off in cubby houses and the times when we built them she ordered them destroyed as dens of iniquity. She used to accuse us of masturbating in the shower, which is why showering time was restricted and supervised. If we were caught playing with the boys or in the boys' room at night, we were accused of having a sexual interest in each other. She used to have our underwear inspected, we were never quite sure for what.

She never let us touch her at all, unless we were invited to give her a kiss, or to pose for photographs with her. Even then it was on rare occasions, such as when she came home from overseas and we were lined up in order of age to give her and Bill a kiss on the cheek.

It was the same when she rang from overseas, we were lined up in order of age to talk to her for a few seconds. When we wrote letters to her there always had to be a first draft which was checked over by the Aunties before we wrote it out in our best handwriting. We were never allowed to start a letter with the word "I" and the first page of the letter had to be on a subject other than ourselves (this was to discourage any show of excess 'ego').

There never was anything spontaneous allowed. It was as if she was completely controlling us, never giving us too much of anything: food, affection, warmth, kindness. Anne managed to always keep us wanting - to keep us wanting her. And how desperately we did: our whole psyche revolved around this desperate need for her love and attention.

I don't think Anne is overly intelligent but she is incredibly manipulative and completely self-obsessed; for example seven of the girl's names were derivatives of the name Anne.

It is very hard to think of her with clinical detachment and attempt to understand her as I would a patient of mine. There is too much emotion associated with her in my thoughts, and she is so complex that I find it impossible to categorise her psychiatrically. However, she does exhibit some of the characteristics of psychotic thought disorder: her thoughts skip and derail, she seldom finishes a sentence and she has fantastic and grandiose delusions.

But whether the flight of ideas and the delusions are a sign of some mental problem or merely a conscious part of the way she maintains her mystique and power, I don't know.

Like Bill she was prone to violent mood swings. She also would forget what she had said before, and rules or orders she had made and then deny she ever said them. For instance she once ordered the girls that slept in the downstairs room to swap beds around on a two weekly basis, so that we wouldn't get any ideas that we were more superior to anyone else by dint of the fact that some of the beds were higher off the floor than others. Then, a little while later, she threw a tantrum when she found out we weren't sleeping in our normal beds. If we turned around on occasions like this and told her that she herself had given the order, she flatly denied it and then no-one was allowed to contradict her.

Earlier this year I spoke to her on the phone and it struck me how oddly she speaks - just like some of the psychotic patients I'd spoken with when I was on Psychiatry rotation.

Most people who invent their own realities are not able to get others to believe in it. Starting a cult that is socially isolated is one way. David Koresh, who was the head of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, was willing to take it to the brink to prove his reality, but it ultimately meant he had to die to prove that he lived what he believed; to prove himself to himself, his followers and to his enemies; to prove, in a distorted sort of way, that what he said was correct.

When Anne Hamilton-Byrne was first challenged in Australia in 1987, after the police rescued us, she could have stayed here and stuck by her disciples, if only to prove that she meant what she was preaching. Part of the cult's doctrine is that suffering brings you to a higher level, and therefore closer to God. This, indeed, was how The Family justified a lot of what they did to us. But when it came to the point of staying and facing the charges, she did no such thing. Instead she ran away and did not come back, except under police escort. Anne, you must admit, still has a powerful sense of self-preservation.

As usual, there was one set of rules for her and another for her followers. Anne justified the discrepancies in her lifestyle compared with the disciples by saying that, because she was an enlightened being, she was on earth totally out of choice, unlike everyone else who had to be



reborn again and again to expiate their karma. She used to say that it was difficult for her to endure being in a physical body, because she was divine, and that she went through a lot of suffering in order to be able to stay on the Earth and teach her followers. Occasionally she would say that followers with pride (one of the deadly sins) emitted an odour, imperceptible to normal people, which was repugnant to her with her more highly developed senses.

So when I say she may be psychotic, I don't mean I think she's crazy, at least not in the popular conception of the word. What I mean is, I think anyone who has created such a fantasy world around them and been able to sustain it for so long despite the outside reality - and indeed to create her own delusional world - would be unbalanced. Thirty years of being deferred to as a living deity would upset anyone's equilibrium. As well, everyone she surrounds herself with reinforces her delusions. Because of the professional people she commands, she has been able also to get away with manipulating the outside world enough to create the reality she desires.

She is a charismatic figure, able to convince intelligent people to follow her. She has a wide knowledge of human nature and she fudges a lot by sentence skipping. A lot of her effect on others is by hinting at things, so that the listener is forced to try to finish the idea themselves. This also has the effect of creating the illusion of higher knowledge and wisdom, something she used to enhance her mystique. When you are speaking to her, she won't finish a thought, she keeps the conversation moving in her direction. All this meant she had a profound effect on us, and not only on us but on many others as well.

She used to say she could read our minds. Although that seems too incredible to believe now, at the time it did not seem unlikely. I can remember when she wrote us a letter saying that she hovered above our beds at night in her spirit form, and so knew all that was going on, and what we were dreaming about. We believed all this. Children are at the lowest end of the pecking order, everyone else has more power than you, so you'll believe anything they tell you. Looking back now I see what she was doing, but then I had no idea.

We'd be in meditation and she'd be leading us and she'd say, "Right, I know you're not concentrating. You're thinking about your next feed." When you consider the pathetic amounts of food they gave us, it wouldn't be hard for an adult to assume that we were thinking about our next feed, but to us it seemed that she did have some extraordinary power.

She maintained she could read our thoughts and would say during meditation that she could "tune-in" to each one of us in turn. She said she was only doing this in an effort to keep our thoughts strictly spiritual and acceptable to her.

I always expected to be hit by a bolt of lightning when my thoughts would wander off the subject of Christ or the Buddha, or whoever we were supposed to be worshipping at the time. Sometimes I would be day-dreaming about what we were going to have for tea and I'd catch myself and pray that she hadn't picked it up.

This notion, of her as a direct representative of God, was reinforced by all the adults we knew, who all believed she could read minds. It is difficult to say now whether I could pick out any good qualities in Anne. I remember one time when I was being beaten by Bill and I looked at her and she told him to stop it. Maybe I looked particularly pleading, maybe she didn't have the stomach for it that day, who knows? But that was one time when she showed some humanity. I remembered and clung to that act of compassion and took it to mean that I meant something to her; but looking back now that seems silly because it was she who had initiated that belting in the first place.

She was the one who had set all the punishments in the first place.

Often we didn't realise this and we blamed the Aunties instead. I think that too was part of the



design. Actually I think that we did realise it, but it was far easier in a psychological sense to use the Aunties as a scapegoat instead of ruining our fantasy of a loving and kind mother.

There was the way sometimes she'd look at you and you'd think she really loved you. I don't know. It's hard to convey just how devoted we were to her and how much we hung off every look and thought she had about us. We wanted so much for her to love us. It hurts me inside thinking of how much I wanted her love. But I don't think she ever did love us.

She lived in, and created for us, a world of deceptions, lies and inconsistencies. The legacy of this continues today in all of us: feelings of worthlessness, a conviction of being innately unworthy, a feeling of being powerless to affect what was happening to us. She indulged in a systematic breakdown of other peoples' sense of self, with her continual attack on their spiritual, and in our case physical as well, lives; and her continued war against any show of ego. This, and the constant cruelty she dished out to us, led to a loss of trust in ourselves and others, and a pervading feeling of inappropriate guilt, of accepting the blame for everything that went wrong.

Nobody ever allowed us the basic rights all children have - to be loved and to have someone to trust. Anne deliberately set out to turn us into people who couldn't form emotional attachments to anyone in the end because she wanted us to form an attachment only to her. For example, none of the Aunties were allowed to give us presents or show affection to us, or to touch us physically, apart from when they belted us. She wanted us to be unable to cope in the outside world so we would be forced to come back to her. I really don't think she feels. I don't see how she can because of the things she does to others - and because of what she did to us.

The reason why I did not want to become an initiate of the Family was because at the time, I was having doubts about Anne and the sect. The hypocrisy of a Brotherhood which preached love and respect and kindness and yet which treated each other as they did, was beginning to get to me. Also I knew that I was meant, once initiated, to believe that Anne was perfect, which is a prerequisite for Gurus - they are also meant to be able to withstand any questioning from Disciples. Yet I had started to see her as failing me as a mother, which meant, if I didn't think she was good enough to be my mother, she couldn't be my Guru.

It was all very complicated at the time. To fully explain it I would have to go back a few years, to the time after we returned from our trip to America where we had seen a lot of Baba Muktananda. I had a great devotion to him at this time, and during the long months when Andrea and I had to endure our punishment, I spent a lot of time reading his books, meditating, chanting the Guru Gita, and doing japa (repetition of a mantra on a string of beads which Baba had given me as a gift when I was eight). When I wasn't doing formal japa, I repeated the manta all the time, with every step that I took when I was walking around the house or outside. Andrea and I would stay awake at night until after the Aunties had gone to bed and the house was all quiet and then sneak in to see each other in the bathroom where we had to sleep so that we could chant the Guru Gita in an all-night session. During that dreadful time, these practices were comforting because I believed that, so long as I continued them, he would be, on a spiritual level, looking after me. They helped me cope, in a psychological and physical level with the hardship of our punishment and with the abandonment by Anne at that time. I reassured myself that Baba, at least, cared for me, even though my world at that time was pretty bleak. I became intensely devotional at that time, and that gave me the strength to endure the punishments with equanimity.

So part of the reason that I felt ambivalent about accepting Anne as my guru was that I knew you could not have two gurus and I wanted Baba to be my Guru. I felt a loyalty to him because my belief in him had sustained me through the bad times in my youth, and also because I sincerely believed in and respected him. I thought he was perfect as all Gurus should be but,

as usual I didn't have any say, even in the matter of who my Master was going to be. I was expected by Anne to become an initiate of her Family and that was all there was to it.

Once initiated, came the 'go-through' and that meant LSD trips.

Everyone knew that it was an inevitable consequence of initiation, one of the rituals that was integral to the spiritual development of the new initiate. I've been present at many 'go-throughs' of people in the sect and ended up having at least a dozen myself.

During a 'go-through' you were supposed to look at yourself and see the badness inside, to regress to significant incidents in childhood and in previous lives which affected your personality and retarded your spiritual development. The drug, which Anne sometimes called the 'herb' or the 'dream medicine', was meant to make this easier. It was also meant to make the spiritual bonding easier between master and disciple. You were supposed to recognise her as the "one true master", Christ incarnate.

She would come in to people when they were under and ask, "Do you know who I am?" The correct answer was, "the Lord Incarnate". The incorrect answer meant you weren't 'working' hard enough. "Working" was 'looking at yourself' and realising what a "horrible" person you were, repenting for your sins and purifying yourself.

Before my first 'go-through' I was deprived of sleep for several nights and made to read 'Yoga and the Bible'. Beforehand I'd watched one of my brothers get down on his knees and beg me not to hate him for being a closet homosexual. This confession had been wrung out of him by Anne after several days of intensive 'working' under the drug. He felt that he was a failure and I did my best to tell him that he'd never be a failure to me because I loved him. We were all scared of revealing our weaknesses but doubted that we would be able to hold anything back once under the influence of the drugs.

Anne's technique, pretty typical, of keeping us awake for several days before a 'go-through' meant that we were incredibly vulnerable anyway. You have to hand it to Anne, she knew her stuff; this was chronic sleep deprivation and it added to the strain of the whole experience. Even today, I find if I am really tired I'm prone to flashbacks of LSD and it is harder to cope than it should be. Add to that the sensory deprivation, for I was placed in a quiet and dark room and never knew whether it was day or night.

At the time of my first go-through' Anne was pretty hard to deal with. She had been so disgusted with me over the 'houses incident' that I felt virtually worthless. I had always felt it was my role in the family to keep the peace and here I was, I'd let her down with my own evil and base nature. After the 'houses' thing I was trying very hard to be pure and spiritual, even to control my thoughts which were still cynical, sacrilegious and doubting.

Essentially, at a deep level I still wanted Baba for my guru, even though he was now dead. Baba died - or attained Mahasamadhi - in October 1982, but we did not hear about it until Anne told us on the phone in mid 1983. I cannot begin to explain just how much his death affected me - the utter devastation that that caused inside me. When I heard the news, my world crumbled. I felt lost and abandoned on a spiritual level. My belief in him and love for him had seen me through the bad times of my life and now there was nothing there left to believe in, no Guru figure to worship and follow. Anne and the Family was the only alternative.

I knew I wasn't ready for initiation because I hadn't really chosen Anne as my Master and although Baba was dead, it somehow still felt unfaithful to him to be swapping to Anne. Here I was: I'd just been initiated and I didn't even have a real faith in my new Guru who was also my mother. But I knew for certain that a disciple cannot follow two gurus.

I was extremely mixed up at the time and part of the confusion was due to what was

happening to my body. I had just reached puberty and I had no idea what was happening to me. When I got my first period I thought that I had cut my leg. Then when I washed my leg and saw there was no cut there, I went to see Aunty Christobel. She wasn't very impressed, she just gave me some pads to wear (they were the old-fashioned sort that one had to strap into a special garter arrangement), said I wasn't sick and seemed a bit revolted by me. It wasn't until I was doing HSC biology that I worked menstruation out. In late 1984, when I thought I was fourteen, but was really sixteen years, I just thought it was another example of how disgusting I really was.

All these new things that were happening were forcing me to become adult. By 'going through' you had the chance to enter the magical world of the grown-up and come to be something more than a sub-human child. Coming straight from Uptop to Broom Farm, I didn't feel nearly ready to join this world.

It was also at this time in 1984, just before my initiation, that Anne changed my name and gave me a new identity. No longer was I to be called Andree who was born in June, July or maybe September. Now, for some reason that I never knew, I was called Sarah. I was now a triplet and had even changed nationalities: I was now born in New Zealand on 16 November 1970. I even had a passport to prove this.

It may seem bizarre now but at the time I took this in my stride. I didn't even consider it strange that Anne had never told me this information up to now, that previously I had believed I was someone else.

This sort of thing - sudden changes in our reality- was par for the course in our lives and we never questioned surprises. We were used to unpredictability as far as Anne was concerned. I hated the name Andree anyway and being a triplet was more interesting than being a single. I now know that there were several passports in my name, a couple of which were Australian. They all had different birth-dates. I also had several birth certificates in different names and in different states.

And it was also in 1984 that I went over to England and there I experienced my first go-through, a consequence of initiation. A lot of my memories about that time are scanty, as it was one of the most traumatic times in my life, and a time of great change. But I will describe what I remember, as best as I can, even though thinking about that awful time still upsets me.

It happened about a month after I got to England, in about September or October. There was a big build-up beforehand, as there was for all the 'go-throughs'. As it was such a great honour and also a religious ritual that ensued from initiation into the sect, I felt a bit like a sacrificial animal in the days leading up to it. People tended to treat me differently, more gently or something. Although I felt a lot of trepidation, having already seen a bit of what happened to initiates, I basked in finally being given some attention and noticed as a human being, in feeling that after this ordeal I might finally be considered an adult and treated as such.

Still consumed with guilt about the 'houses incident', I'd spent most of the last few weeks creeping around trying to be invisible. By pretending to be invisible I thought I would actually be invisible. I felt so low that I wished I didn't even exist. Mostly I was trying to stay out of Anne's range. She was feeling a bit vicious at the time and used to deride me in front of the other sect members there, telling them of my role in the 'houses incident' and anything else that sprang to mind that would embarrass me.

She was always telling people how ugly and fat I was. I loafed around feeling horrible and embarrassed whenever I ran into anyone. I tried to pretend that what she said didn't hurt but in the end I felt I was little more than an eyesore.

Finally the day of the 'go-through' arrived. I'd been up all the night before wondering what was

in store for me. We weren't supposed to sleep anyway in the preceding few nights; we were meant to spend that time reading and trying to understand 'Yoga and the Bible', which outlined the responsibility of an initiate to his guru.

I had been trying to concentrate on this but, still consumed with guilt from the 'houses incident', all I could think about was how pathetic I was and how I would fail at this as well as everything. Early that morning I went for a walk around the paddocks with Scotty, our pet husky, hoping they would forget all about me and wishing that I could keep walking in the clear bright morning air forever and not have to face the coming ordeal.

But at about nine or ten that morning they sent Michael out to get me. I was allowed a piece of toast and then Anne ran the bath and I was told to get in. I couldn't believe it, Anne was actually looking after me. The guest bedroom was prepared.

If I hadn't been so freaked out I suppose I would have lapped up all the unaccustomed care and attention from Anne. After the bath I changed into a short nightie and was told to get straight into bed. I didn't want to go to bed at that hour of the morning, I wanted to spend more time walking in the paddocks with Scotty. But as usual what I wanted to do wasn't an option.

Anne came into the guest bedroom and gave me a piece of paper with a mandala printed on it and a little white tablet which she said would help me hallucinate better. I know now that the paper contained a dose of LSD but I still do not know what the tablet was. She said it was something that sounded like 'nitric acid'.

About half an hour after I'd chewed the paper and swallowed the tablet I started to feel the effects. At first the light looked brighter, then everything looked clear cut, as if each object was delineated in its own aura of existence. It seemed as if everything was breathing, as if everything was alive. It all seemed beautiful and yet completely terrifying.

Anne left me alone as the drug began to take hold. She waited just long enough to see it worked. She turned out the lights so all I could see was a little glimmer through the curtains. That was the last light I saw for a very long time. I was all alone with the strange patterns in my head, weird shapes would hurtle at me out of the darkness, shapes like the little witches I used to imagine at night that I was scared of as a child. I started to hyperventilate. I wanted to escape the fear that was building inside me.

But all the time I struggled to maintain control of myself. I thought that if I gave in I would stop being me. Also at the same time I suppose I was trying to challenge Anne's power: I was determined I would not make a fool of myself like others I had heard and seen, screaming and crying and acting like mad people under the drug. I still believed I could have some control over this process so I fought it. Yet at the same time I wanted it all to be over.

In fact, unconsciousness would have been a great blessing at times during that trip. It is hard to describe this without sounding melodramatic, but for a fourteen year old to have an LSD trip is terrifying enough and the fact that it was forced on me made it more so. It felt like my mind was slipping around inside my head. I felt very scared, and very vulnerable that first go-through.

Even as I write about it now, I can almost taste the fear that I was experiencing. It felt as if each part of my body was separate. As if sometimes the skin and bone didn't link me to myself. I remember once looking at my hands in the dimness : they were shining and then the skin seemed to writhe and crawl off my hands like it had become maggots feeding on a corpse. The walls and ceiling of the dark room in which I was enclosed swam at me and then receded into the distance. It seemed at times as if I and the bed in which I lay were alone in the universe and then as if the walls were going to move in so close they would crush me.



And while all this was going on I was meant to be "working". This was a word used by Anne to mean using the drug to allow one to step back from the normal envelope of self and have a good look at the inner parcel. At that point horrible things about yourself were supposed to be revealed to you and then you could recant them, be forgiven and repent.

Well, I was too scared to do it effectively and if I started concentrating on that process I felt I would lose control and give in to the drug's power. Anyway, I didn't need a drug to help me find out how rotten I was. I already knew that only too well, after fourteen years of indoctrination.

I was left alone all that day. I knew the day was passing by the sounds coming up from the kitchen beneath, the sounds of the tables being set. Then came the silence of the night.

The drug was wearing off by then and I was very thirsty and hungry and tired. I wanted to sleep but I thought I should fight sleep. I was desperate to maintain control. Very late that night or it might have even been early the next morning, I'm not sure which, Anne came in and gave me some more LSD. She chastised me severely and said I hadn't worked well enough. She said I needed an increased dose so that she could get me working properly.

After that I had no real idea of what was happening. Sometimes I would remember who I was and that I was 'going-through'. Most of the time I didn't have a clue. I remember feeling like I was floating and it seemed to go on for a very long time. Anne came in once or twice, and also sent messengers in to say that I should prepare for a spiritual experience and that I should repent for my selfishness and for the fact that I was a slut and I desired to be raped whenever I was out on the street. At this stage I didn't even know what rape was.

Then Anne came in and made me curl into a ball, so that I could regress into babyhood. Nothing happened, probably because I didn't know what I was meant to do. But I managed to remember and re-experience a few bad things, like the 'Ants incident', and Anne took that as a sign that I was getting somewhere. She gave me some more of the drug and told me to keep working and I'd get some good insights into myself soon.

I think that a few days and nights passed while I was in that state. I could only tell if another day had passed by the rattle of dishes in the kitchen below me as they prepared dinner each evening. I was completely terrified for almost the whole time and I still don't know how long I was kept drugged in that room. The drugs made it difficult to tell what was real and what was hallucination.

I am not sure of what happened after that. I remember the door opened and a doctor came into the room. He was one of the doctors of the sect. He sat on the bed. He said I was evil and that he had been sent by my Master to cure me. My evil, he said, was that subconsciously I was wanting to be raped. I didn't know what he meant by this. I remember a feeling of terror spreading through me. He told me he was going to give me an operation "to mix up your insides so you will never be able to have children" and that I would never want to think about sex again because I would be sick if I did. He said my Guru had ordered this as a punishment for my filthy mind and as a lesson to teach me that God is more important than sex.

He had a knife. I think he cut me. I remember screaming. I thought that I felt the knife deep inside me. In the redness of the pain I heard Anne's laughter. She was in the room watching, goading him on. I heard her yelling, "Perhaps that will teach you, you whore, you slut. We will give you what you want." I felt the stickiness of the blood. My blood. I passed out...

That is all I consciously remember about my go-through. The rest is the stuff of nightmares. I used to relive it every September for years, and the rest of the year I tried to forget it. It is only recently that I have gained any control over the nightmares but whenever I think about that 'go-through', I get a low aching in my stomach. I think I was brutalised, but how much is real and how much is drug-induced hallucination, I do not know. But I have a scar which I don't



remember existing before my going through and I certainly did not receive it afterwards.

Whatever I thought happened, whether or not it actually happened or was merely a drug-induced hallucination, it changed my life. I left the fourteen year old Andree behind forever. It was as if I had to sacrifice part of myself to survive the experience. After the 'go-through' my concepts of self changed and I existed in a daze of despair. It was like living in a black haze and functioning as some kind of a robot.

I was able to speak and observe the social niceties, yet not be aware that I was. I was not aware that I even existed. I think my mind was unable to cope with what I'd been through and it just left me there. My ability to analyse and to feel emotions had left me.

I didn't consciously try to get into this state. It just happened. I've since learned that state isn't something the conscious mind has any control over. I know it because at other times when it all got too much for me, I tried to get back there to hide away from everything and I just couldn't do it. Refuge in Hell from Hell. Sounds idiotic I know, but there are times when anywhere looks better than where you are.

I'm not sure how I can adequately analyse just what this state was that I retreated into at that time. Perhaps it was a form of psychic splitting, of dissociation from the extreme mental pain and emotions that were too difficult to face mentally at that time and still preserve my sanity and sense of selfhood. It was a primitive defence against emotional pain, a mental representation of curling up in a ball to avoid attack.

One day as I was stepping into the car to go out to Tunbridge Wells with Bill, I realised that was exactly what I was doing: stepping into a car with Bill. My hibernation was over and my identity came back to me. I asked Bill what day it was and I remember being surprised at his answer. Even the month was a shock; I think a couple of months had passed. He said, "You've been away a long time. It's good to have you back", which shocked me too, because I hadn't thought he had noticed.

It's hard to explain how much the first go-through affected me, but I know I've never been the same since. Andree was dead and Sarah had been born. I now believed that life was not ever going to be good or exciting; I'd lost the shine that childhood gives things. I decided then that life was a series of struggles and disappointments and that fate (or 'karma' as I called it then) showed no mercy to anyone. I decided also I could live without love because I was a survivor. I was so tough I was almost brittle, but I liked myself better now than I had when I was Andree. Sarah had better control of herself than Andree ever had. She wasn't always wishing things would get better. She could survive in a world without love.

Sarah controlled her emotions because she denied she had any. I never cried in the days after my first go-through. I believed if I cried I would die; to cry would be to acknowledge the pain in my heart, the absolute desolation I felt at the most primal level. I did such a good job convincing myself, I didn't even accept that I could feel anything until recently. I am still recovering from that first go-through.

I gave up Baba as my guru at that time too. I felt now that I had to: I could no longer endure the duality of having two gurus. At a deep level I suppose I was very angry and disappointed that he had died and I could no longer count on him to save me in a spiritual sense. Paradoxically, although the experience of the go-through was an awful one, it cemented my status as a disciple of Anne. I started to believe in her as my Master: I suppose I was terrified not to. I believed I had to accept the consequences of my initiation and learn to be a disciple of the path that I had not chosen, but was now forced to accept. Baba was no longer around to give me a chance at another spiritual path. Anne was now my Master and I had to do the sadhana (spiritual discipline that occurs between initiation and final realisation) as her disciple

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I went through another three times when I was in England during that trip but those go-throughs weren't as traumatic as the first one, partly because I'd roped off part of my psyche and partly because I doubt that even purely on a physical level anything could be as bad again. The subsequent go-throughs only lasted about two days and by comparison that didn't seem much of a problem.

In 1986, when I was sixteen, I again went through three to four times and once again at Crowther House before I went back to England. By then my head was pretty messed up, so more LSD would send me off into "flashbacks" of the first experience. Anne used to try to plant "control words" in us. These were hypnotic suggestions she would repeat while you were under the influence of the drug, so in the end she only had to say certain words, when I was out of it, and send me into a 'flashback' situation. I cannot remember what they were now: in any event they have no power over me now: I believe that those sort of things, rather like pointing the bone and hypnotic suggestion in general, only have as much power as the victim is prepared to allow them.

Sometimes I tried to protect myself when I went-through with a meditation trick. You hyperventilate and concentrate very hard and you can go into a trance-like state or even lose consciousness and so escape the pain of reality. I used this as an adaptation method for go-throughs and also, after I had left the sect, when I was finding it too hard to cope because of my fear. I'd been taught to believe that if you thought "wrongly" (which meant questioning Anne or even having cynical thoughts about her), you would be killed. I was very frightened in those days.

## **ANNE'S BACKGROUND AND RELIGION**

'When religion becomes organized, man ceases to be free. It is not God that is worshipped but the group or the authority that claims to speak in His name. Sin becomes disobedience to authority and not violation of integrity'. (Radhakrishnan, 1956, p 41).

The cultural milieu within the Family is not unlike that described by Robert Lifton in his book on thought reform and totalism in communist China. The control of human communication is such that there is no privacy, not even that of thought. Every aspect of the cult members life is transparent to other members, every thing they say is reported to the leader. And even more significant, there is the belief that not even one's thoughts are hidden from the omniscient gaze of the Teacher. There is an active culture of confession, with purging and catharsis a welcome emotional release, an orgiastic occurrence in what is otherwise a drab and emotionless existence – one in which, at times other than these, displays of individuality and emotion are actively condemned and expected to be suppressed. Not only that, but emotion is seen as a form of weakness, a lack of spirituality and the Path is considered to help one rise above such unseemly displays. Yet at the time of confessions, be they induced under the influence of hallucinogens, emotion is not only allowed but actively encouraged. And the more lurid and self-abnegating the details of the confession, the greater it pleases Anne and the other senior cult members leading the session. The pressure is such that people often make up details of crimes of thought or action which they in all likelihood did not commit – but under the social pressure it becomes more and more credible to them that these crimes or misdemeanours must have been something they have done or thought – of not consciously then unconsciously. I have seen several people under the influence of LSD for up to days at a time, succumb eventually to the accusations of homosexuality which only a few days before they had strenuously denied. If one's version of reality is continually eroded, if one is subjected endlessly to the possibility that current unhappiness must be due to unconscious or repressed unsavoury thoughts, if one's innate existential guilt and need to confess are so prevailed upon, then it becomes very easy to offer up a juicy or salacious titbit about one's own crimes and

with that receive approval absolution and a sense of surrender of one's own judgement to an infinitely more superior and better and wiser power than one's own demonstrably weak and ineffectual self. The urge to self-punishment in expiation for existential guilt that is inherent in every human is afforded release and from that accrues a certain psychological satisfaction. Like in totalist China private possession of thoughts or opinions becomes viewed as highly immoral. And, as Lifton says ' the totalist confession takes on a number of special meanings. It is first ... a means of maintaining a perpetual inner emptying or psychological purge of impurity; this purging milieu enhances the totalist's hold upon existential guilt. Second, it is an act of symbolic self-surrender, the expression of the merging of individual and environment. Third, it is a means of maintaining an ethos of total exposure – a policy of making public... everything possible about the life experiences, thoughts and passions of each individual and especially those elements which might be regarded as derogatory'. (Lifton, 1961, pp 425 – 6).

At the same time as one knows at a certain level that there can be no trust in others around, trust is held up and esteemed as a higher virtue. Anne is the divine Mother, the follower is encouraged to sink into her arms like an infant, like one reborn as a child of Christ, and the feeling of purgation and emotional renewal after an LSD 'clearing' contributes to this emotional tendency.

Anne Hamilton-Byrne is the guru and leader of a sect called "The Family" or occasionally 'The Brotherhood' or "the Great White Brotherhood". The basis of The Family's religion is that Anne is a living deity and the re-incarnation of Jesus Christ. The sect's doctrine comprises the belief that Jesus Christ was a great master who came down to earth, but that in addition to him there were other enlightened being such as Buddha and Krishna. Anne was the latest reincarnation of Christ, or god-manifestation on Earth. The rest of the sect's beliefs are a hotch-potch of Christianity and Eastern mysticism. Most of the teachings revolve around the virtue of suffering: how beneficial that is to the soul and how it has to be embraced as the path to enlightenment. A lot of emphasis is placed on austerity, chastity, meditation and silence. The beliefs of the sect are mainly based around the concepts of karma and reincarnation and the attainment of self-realisation through spiritual work, that form some of the fundamental tenets of Eastern religious philosophy. The amalgamation of Western and Eastern religious beliefs and philosophy that constitute the doctrine of Theosophy seemed to be Anne's model for the beliefs she preached.

Some of the sect beliefs, dictated by Anne, are, however, a little more bizarre. For example, Anne decreed that Hell was not hot but cold so one of her methods of getting back at those who displeased her was to write out the name of wrong do-ers and put it in the freezer under an ice cube. Thereby consigning them to Hell. Also she said that the end of the world was going to happen very shortly and that only those that were living in the Dandenongs would survive. Another method of placing a curse upon those that had gone against her was to use wax dolls. She would stick pins in these dolls to cause discomfort and illness in people she thought had done her wrong. Even more sinister to those of the Christian belief, she also insisted that sect members perform the sign of the Cross in the opposite direction to what is prescribed by the Church.

Every Thursday night and on Sunday nights as well when Anne was in the country, the disciples of the sect gather at a hall called Santiniketan Lodge in Ferny Creek opposite Raynor Johnson's house. Anne also had another meeting hall in the hills called the White Lodge, but this was for smaller meetings of inner core members and more intimate meditation, discussion and LSD sessions. Santiniketan was built like a church, except it had lush blue velvet carpet, and an extremely good sound and heating system. Inside was a large dark hall, carpeted in dark blue. The hall could seat a couple of hundred people and was furnished with rows of chairs up to within about three metres of a couple of carpeted steps that led up to Anne's chair and the altar. In the front was an altar with effigies of Christ and Buddha and many candles. Also in the front was a big chair and a little reading table, behind which Anne sat for her sermons on

Thursday night to the sect gathered in front. The building also contained a library and a sound room where all Anne's talks were recorded. There was an elaborate lighting system, designed to create a blue aura around her. Anne sat out in the front picked out by a halo of bluish light. The lighting was arranged so that a light fell on the crucifix and several on her figure, but the rest of the hall was shrouded in darkness. Behind her was a large altar over which hang a gigantic image of the crucified Christ. On the altar were many of the symbols of various religions: several Jewish candelabras, a statue of the Buddha, and several symbols of the Hindu faith, including a representation of the word 'Om'. More prayers followed and then a sermon from Anne.

All the initiated disciples - about one hundred and fifty people - were expected to attend the Thursday night sermons whether Anne was present or not. Not to come was considered defiance, and the person would be censored for it by other members or by Anne herself. When Anne was not there, they would listen to tapes of her earlier talks. On the nights Anne was present the whole sect would gather themselves in the hall of Santiniketan Lodge and meditate for about an hour in the darkened hall. Incense would be burning and soft music playing; I remember the room was always extremely hot and stuffy. Then the background music would stop and a blue light would pick out Anne as she walked into the room to the strains of Handel's Largo down the aisle between the rows of chairs: all the disciples would stand as she entered. She would seat herself at the front of the altar on a throne-like chair and everyone would kneel on the floor until Largo had finished playing. The room was dark and blue. Often she would then say "Good evening, my brethren" or "Hello my friends".

No-one else was allowed to talk, although sometimes she would ask if a specific person was present and they would answer that they were. She would then lead us in the Lord's Prayer. We would all kneel for this and then we would recite the special mantra of the sect:

"To thy last supper

Let me be allowed to stay

O Son of God

For neither have I betrayed any secrets to thine enemies

Nor have I given thee a kiss of Judas

But like a thief, I pray unto thee

Remember me O Lord

As I enter into Thy glorious Kingdom

Almighty God"

This was considered an intensely secret and powerful mantra. Many of the words held special importance and emphasis which was reiterated when one was 'going-through'. It has taken me seven years to be able to recite this mantra without fearing a loss of mental stability,. even now as I write it my heart is pounding and I am strangely anxious.

After that Anne would continue the prayer in a soliloquy, asking for special blessings for those who were ill, for those who were having any crises of faith. It was often during these prayers that she would rename those who she had singled out earlier, and make it clear to everyone that they had done something wrong. She would accuse them, in this public forum, of not trusting enough, or not suffering enough to justify being on the true Path, or of not being true



enough disciples, or of not living up to their initiation vows. Or she would simply say that she was disappointed with several people - they knew who they were. Everyone would be cringing at this point, hoping that they would not be singled out for her displeasure.

A typical sermon from Anne on a Thursday night would start with music: Handel's Messiah, Beethoven's Ninth and, the theme song of the sect, Handel's Largo and a theme by Albinoni. Then she would answer letters from those in the sect that had written to her about their earthly or spiritual troubles during the preceding week.

I have a tape of one of Anne's Thursday night sermons where she is answering some of these letters. I will quote directly from it to illustrate just how she rambled on and how often what she said was often either incomprehensible or couched in double meanings.

" Good evening to everyone of you , and great love to you all.

Quite a number of the questions I have received, there is a lot more on your mind then put down, never mind it is just a matter of tuning in...."

...Then referring to a letter, "Not being able to accept or understand what's going on in your life and you're initiated too, do you think it should be easier? Many many down the ages have wondered why life seems to hit back in a much stronger way when one is initiated or is it just you , you say. It happens on all paths of truth my friend, many amongst us everywhere can see a pattern through the pain and the suffering in the world and in ourselves. And even though you've been on the path of the light for twenty years or more as soon as the pattern shows up or you see through it. The initiated soul is at a stage of a strong inner conviction that he or she is now able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. If not all the time some of the time. When that happens there isn't a lot of time to waste for the spiritual quickening will take place. Our body, our nerve system, our brain, our pulses will all work towards this great mighty issue of our soul. Don't waste time in being anxious. By the time you get to this stage you laugh at those who judge others, but don't even judge them, don't laugh at anyone who judges others, there's no judgment left if you've reached that stage. One of the main things in that learning is don't put yourself in the position or anyone else, to be in the shadow of your judge or their judgment or self appointed ideas or thoughts.

Even if you are at the fundamental beginning of the path of that spiritual training you are aware of strengths that will come to you through initiation and then of course there is the meditation which is the gate that has to open all other levels of consciousness..."

And so she would continue on in that vein; the tape I have goes for 45 minutes and doesn't get any more intelligible than that. The disciples in front would be listening intently for a personal message, and struggling to attribute a meaning to what was essentially continuous free-association and raving.

Then we again prayed: the Lord's prayer and others and listened to some more music. Anne would preach again for about an hour. She would basically read from a speech, often a lot of it direct quotes from the Scriptures of other people. In later years I knew her teachings were rarely original because I would find great slabs of what she had said in the spiritual books I was reading. In fact, often the only times her talks made any sense were when she was quoting from someone else.

I remember one time when we confronted one of the Aunties about this and they were defensive about it: saying the other Master must have copied from Anne and not vice versa. After the reading, Anne would then free associate, berating certain members of the sect, talk about being persecuted, give special messages to some disciples and lead prayers for others. Everyone would be expected to give donations and leave a cheque or an envelope full of money at the door.



But who were the disciples of the sect? Who were these people who sat in that hall every Thursday night and listened, enraptured, to Anne's teachings? Whose lives were lived in poverty, austerity and misery due to her teachings? We had no choice about belonging to this group, but who were these others from the outside world who submitted themselves without question to a set of bizarre expectations and beliefs?

I believe that there are three groups of people who made up the sect, many of them professional people. Some of them are, I think, are innocents, who truly believe; others are brain-washed people who have given up thinking for themselves. There is a last group I think of as evil. I see them as no more than criminals out for all the sect can offer them. These people form the inner core of the sect.

Anne has complete control of sect member's lives. Sect members rely on her to make even the smallest decision and sect doctrine reinforces this. Providing one stays in favour with the Master, and that is the definition of a good disciple, she will also assume responsibility for all the years to come.

Upon initiation into the sect the Master assumes karmic responsibility for all past actions of the new disciple. The slate is wiped clean. If you are an innocent believer looking for a God on earth, this must sound pretty good.

Anyone who started to question Anne's wisdom or power was told that their intellect was a handicap to their spiritual enlightenment. Contradictions were explained as demonstrations of the uncleanness of mind in less spiritual beings and one was made to feel incredibly guilty for asking any questions. You were not allowed to ask what she meant when she didn't make sense: you were supposed to meditate and ponder upon the words and when you were spiritual enough it would come to you what the message was.

We believed, and in fact had seen that the Master's wrath could be terrifying if she was deceived, crossed or disobeyed and could manifest itself in physical or psychological injury to the believer, such as contracting cancer or causing a loved one to be struck down by an accident. Although these things inevitably happen to people, when they did occur in sect members lives they were used to reinforce Anne's powers by tying every event into the belief system.

Provided the believer was complete in his or her faith, that is, had no doubts, and worshipped her whole-heartedly, this helped them to ignore all previous morality. It also allowed them to justify past actions because, they reasoned, if the Master told them to do it, it was all right. Therefore, from a spiritual base all was excused. Anne's reasoning here was that earthly morality was quite different from spiritual morality anyway. So here was Anne, giving these people permission to do anything, as long as they also did what she told them and believed in her completely.

This was the Sixties and here was Anne saying anything went as long as she said so. That meant sex, drugs and power. It was a tempting combination for many of Melbourne's professionals. Anne gave them permission to ignore all the rules of society. They were special, they belonged to Anne and that meant they were obeying a higher law than the laws ordinary people had to obey.

These people sacrificed all conscience and responsibility for their actions to Anne and in fact, became almost willing slaves to her. I remember a dinner table conversation a few years ago when Anne was holding forth on one of her theories. She said the earth was hollow and aliens lived in the centre of it. I didn't say anything at the time about the aliens but I knew she was talking utter rubbish. Some of her assumptions about geography and geology were so wrong I felt compelled to challenge them.

There must have been others at the table who knew she was raving. Most of them were educated people, but not one of them said anything. I think if she had said, "the world is made of green cheese", even the most intellectual among them would ignore all the evidence and agree, that yes of course, she was right and the rest of the world was wrong.

She often used to say that she was "twenty or thirty years ahead of what scientists had discovered", and so lots of her more bizarre statements were accepted by sect members as truths that science had not yet uncovered. Anne believed that she had access to knowledge only possessed by spirits in another plane and that this knowledge was only revealed to scientists when the spirits believed that humanity was ready to use it properly.

What explained the adherence of the brainwashed, those who were closer into the sect, and knew more about Anne? Many must have been cleverer than her, as almost all were better educated. She had no formal qualifications other than those she dreamt up, and she was a plagiariser. Surely some of these people were clever enough to look beyond the veneer of spirituality and see the hypocrisy of preaching asceticism while living in self-indulgent luxury.

The bulk of the sect was made up of professional people. Without their support and participation, Anne Hamilton-Byrne would never have become what she is today. It was their names, or most importantly, the letters that went after their names, that gave her the credibility and social power she needed. It gave her the means to keep those she already had and to get more and similar people into the cult..

These professional people: doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, psychiatrists, nurses and social workers allowed her successfully to pull the wool over everyone's eyes for more than twenty years.

Had The Family been a group of strangely dressed people meeting once or twice a week for meditation, an address by the Master, playing of music and chanting, they would never have gone unnoticed for so long. But pin-striped professionals in their conservative suits with their impeccable social credentials could get away with maintaining in their private life morals that were completely at variance with their professional ethics. They looked respectable, people thought, therefore they must be respectable.

Who were these professionals? They were doctors who wrote out the prescriptions that controlled us; lawyers, who wrote out the Deed Polls that were needed to forge passports and birth certificates that created our false identities; social workers, who allowed Anne to by-pass normal channels to allow her to adopt, or simply steal in some instances, sixteen children; doctors and nurses who gave her contacts with rich dying people who then left their estates to her. It was the same doctors who signed their death certificates; psychiatrists who had people committed to Newhaven - the Family owned psychiatric hospital; and doctors and nurses who supervised the abuse of LSD,( which for a while they actually obtained free of charge from the Swiss drug company, Sandoz).

It was also sect doctors who prescribed all the drugs she used to control and sedate people, because without drugs Anne's power would have been diminished enormously. I can't believe these educated people couldn't have seen through Anne. Surely there must have been some among them who could have seen through the elaborately constructed veneer that was the belief system of The Family. Even if you looked at one of the basic instructions of the sect, that we live a life of asceticism, you had an instant contradiction; here was Anne living it up completely, spending money on anything that took her fancy.

No one questioned Anne and the children at Uptop bore the brunt of all the secrecy. We were her victims. Yet so too were the adults who failed to, or where incapable of, applying any sort of intellectual rigour to what Anne said. Nothing added up and yet none of them questioned, or thought for themselves, or attempted to test the truth of what she was saying.

To leave a sect like this takes massive courage. On Anne's orders these people had cut their ties with their own families of origin unless they too were sect members. Their social and professional circles were mostly sect people. If a sect member showed any kind of doubt they were persecuted by everyone they knew. Vicious rumours began and however improbable the rumours seemed, the victim was ostracised and condemned, threatened, sometimes physically, and made to feel like a miserable Judas for doubting the Master.

However, if they recanted, they were once more accepted into the sect with open arms. Most of the professionals in the Family have broken the law for Anne and they know how easy it would be for Anne to see to it that they lost their jobs and their reputations. So it was in their interests to stay safe and silent within the bosom of the Family.

And then there were the inner core members: the Evil ones. I believe that they were only in for what they could get. They were under no delusions about Anne's holiness and they stayed because it suited them. Their motivation was simply the quest for power. M. Scott Peck in his book 'People of the Lie' describes the evil personality: a person who quests for power over others, who has a need to subjugate life and liveliness in others and a total lack of insight into the enormity of their own wrong-doings. These people are recognisable by the number and complexity of their lies.

The snobbery and elitism seen among these inner core members illustrates this. The more they got away with, the more they felt superior to the rest of society and the more they attempted. The guilt of these people is unquestionable. They established the sect, they targeted patients and friends, administered drugs, ran Newhaven, falsified documents, and carried out Anne's dirty work. They dealt with the huge inflows and outflows of money that Anne commanded. They even rationalised it, because there were only ten or twelve of them, by claiming to be the reincarnations of Christ's apostles working towards some great unseen spiritual goal. They will remain with her to the end. Each has multiple names and identities and their legacy is a farrago of lies.

I think one of the reasons Anne remained unchallenged for so long was the recruitment methods into the Family. The method was simple and almost invariable. Someone in the sect told Anne about a friend or an acquaintance who was unhappy, questioning or just going through a hard period in their life. Anne got all the private details. It didn't matter if the person was a patient of a doctor or a nurse in the Family, as professional confidentiality meant nothing to the sect.

Once the candidate was chosen, a 'softening-up' process then began in which the sect member opened the person's mind to the possibility of seeking alternative rather than conventional help. They might suggest the person see a "a very wise lady" who in the past had helped others enormously with their problems. The vulnerable person had no reason not to trust the friend, doctor or psychiatrist - the advantages of having professionals as your recruitment officers become apparent.

Often the people recommended to Anne held the same sorts of jobs as those doing the recommending. I've often wondered why these intellectual people, the so-called cream of society, should have been so vulnerable to Anne. These are purely my own thoughts, I have no evidence to back them up, but I think it might be something like this. Despite their apparent worldly success these people were unhappy. They were looking for something more. They felt failures on a personal and spiritual plane. They wanted someone to lead them, someone to guide them in making decisions in their lives, someone they could surrender totally to on all levels. They could not handle the existential loneliness of being a human being. Many of them had unhappy family lives as well, or had suffered abuse as children. Some simply had psychiatric problems and were led to believe that Anne would offer them a cure. Enter Anne Hamilton-Byrne.

Anne was like a spider spinning a web. Single lonely people, often newly divorced or separated, were her prey. She sought them out. Information about people with emotional problems came her way through her spies in the medical profession. Entrapment began gently.

Most of these people at the time they came into contact with Anne were going through a bad period in life. Their child may have just died or more commonly, their marriage had broken up, or maybe it wasn't anything as serious as that. Some of them were just questioning things, having a mid-life crisis. A good friend or someone they trusted, recommended they go to a prayer meeting on the grounds that the spiritual side of life is so comforting and that they themselves had derived so much from these meetings.

Trusting them, they went along and, after the meeting which seemed not very bizarre, they were introduced to Anne. She mysteriously seemed to know everything about them, showered them with attention and charm and everyone around her made them feel special and welcome. It was not long before they received an invitation to be given the "opportunity of a religious experience". They were not told that LSD will play a part in this experience.

When the sect owned Newhaven, the former private psychiatric hospital in Kew, things were very easy. They were booked in to Newhaven and, once in there, were completely at Anne's mercy. Her psychiatrists would put them under LSD for days, even up to a week.

They would be left alone in dark rooms while under the influence of the drug and every now and then there would be "visitations" by Anne herself. During these 'go-throughs' or 'clearings', in the parlance of the sect, you were supposed to "look at yourself" and see how horrible you were; then repent and realise that only through Anne could you ever expect redemption.

Through this drug-induced haze Anne appeared God-like and even said she was Jesus Christ and you realised she offered you a way to attain the true potential of your spirituality.

Under the drug, while you were at your most vulnerable, you were expected to confess to incidents you were ashamed of in the past or to secret fears or hang-ups. You were supposed to be able to relive and abreact past experiences so that these things could be put behind you and resolved. Sometimes Anne targeted special qualities which she called 'blocks' (to enlightenment) which you were supposed to 'look at' and 'work on' whilst under the influence of the drug. While at first the drug may have been used openly in the hospital by sect psychiatrists, after LSD became illegal, it was still used, and still is, by Anne, as a form of seeking and maintaining mind control. The hallucinatory effects of the drug were well used. If you didn't have a guilt complex or a hang-up before you went-through, you were sure to have one by the time they had finished with you. Sexual hang-ups were a sect speciality.

After a couple of sessions people were usually converted. It is interesting that most of the professionals in The Family have been in it since it began and those that left tended to do so right at the start. There are no in-betweens in The Family.

Anne used what you said to her when you were in a drugged stupor to control you for the rest of your life and the longer you stayed involved, the more control she took. So, assuming you finally saw through the hype and realised what a hypocrite she was, you could not leave. Compromised completely, you stood to lose everything by leaving. This is a real situation for many people.

Or was it just the charisma of the woman? Believe me Anne has plenty of it. And it wasn't just the children who felt it. Looking through newspaper files on The Family is a revelation. Here is one example, this from 'The Australian Women's Weekly', October 1987 where a former sect member, known as Elizabeth, recalls Anne as being "incredibly loving at first. But if you failed at anything then the tongue-lashings would begin."



She says her children were taken from her and given to other sect members. "She parted people from their children because she wouldn't have complete control over people if they were still making decisions about their children. We were told the children would be brought up away from outside influences by people who had looked after them in previous lives.

"It seems ridiculous... It's hard to understand how so many educated and privileged people could have become ensnared. What you have to understand is the power of the woman's personality. She played God and we - stupidly - accepted her decisions. We rationalised that she knew best. And anyway... if we disagreed or resisted, there were always the doctors to administer the drugs."

In 'The Age' in September 1983 David Elias wrote at length about Anne's methods and about Newhaven Hospital. The Hospital was owned by Mrs Marion Villimek and she was both a director and matron. He was contacted by a former patient, George Ellis, whose case perfectly illustrates the way the hospital was run.

In 1966 Mr Ellis was a patient at Newhaven, being treated for alcoholism. He had been a medical student at Queen's College at Melbourne University and when Dr Raynor Johnson was still head. Dr Johnson visited a patient in the next bed and they recognised each other. Another frequent visitor to this patient was Anne Hamilton-Byrne, who was then Mrs Riley. "This was to be the lady who captivated me with her talk of spiritual things, her knowledge of God and a familiarity with things psychic and her soothsaying.", he said.

Mr Ellis told 'The Age': "During her visits to Newhaven Mrs Riley became friendly with me - even then she had a sort of charisma. She suggested to me that on my discharge, it would be courting disaster to return to my bachelor flat and suggested that it would be a better idea to come and stay with her and another person at her home in Ferny Creek." George Ellis went to live with Anne and pretty soon found he was being "introduced to the mysteries of the procedures of the sect".

He was initiated into the cult and later married another member - at Anne's suggestion - that marriage has since broken down. He detailed his attendances at "clearings" (also called "go-throughs") where sect members were given drugs under the supervision of three psychiatrists. He claimed the clearings were carried out at Newhaven and in private houses. Sometimes as many as six sect members would be going-through at one time.

He talked about Anne's method which involved having sect members sit with those going - through and reporting back to her anything that was said. Anne then used this knowledge to create the impression that she had psychic powers. He and his family were sent to England several times and once to India by Anne.

Later Anne sent him to Uptop as a cook and to look after us children. He talked about how he and other sect members had nursed Lord Casey, after a serious road accident. Mr Ellis was assigned to watch over Lord Casey at night and to give him his medication. All this despite the fact that he had only ever had a small amount of training as a medical student.

But it is still hard to understand how Anne attained her power. In fact it doesn't make a lot of sense unless you acknowledge her extraordinary charisma. Still, the truth is, she wouldn't have been half as successful without Dr Raynor Johnson.

Dr Johnson was a physicist who had spent much of his life studying eastern mysticism and religions and had written several books on the subject. Apparently Anne appeared at Dr Johnson's door one Sunday just before the Johnson family was to sit down for their roast dinner. Dr Johnson took her into his study. After some time he emerged in a state of high excitement. He rushed to his wife and said, "Mary, she wants to meet you." This is how The Family was born.



We were told Raynor Johnson was our godfather and I remember a kindly old fellow with white hair who came to visit us sometimes.

## **The Family Today.**

As the group becomes progressively smaller, its identity seems to become increasingly dependent on maintaining each one of its members. Thus Anne is in much closer contact today with members than she ever was. In the earlier days, when the sect numbered up to 200 or more, only certain people saw Anne with any frequency – most would only catch a glimpse of her from afar at the Thursday night spiritual meetings at the Hall and very rarely be granted a private audience, much less get to talk one on one or on the phone. Now phone contact is very regular, nearly everyone sees her practically every week and she is much more accessible should people want to have private advice. Also the contact of each and every group member with each other has vastly increased. Social events, once very rare, are now held with regularity. In response to legal pressure from ex-members, an Association has formed to deal with planning and administration functions to do with sect properties – most people currently in the group attend meetings to do with this, participate in working bees, and of course some are office holders. This means the group, whilst smaller, is more cohesive than ever, and individuals are more nurtured by Anne and by other members than in earlier times.

## **AFTER LEAVING THE SECT.**

August 14th, 1987. That was the day that was the turning point in our lives. That was the day, it feels to me now, when life for us actually started. Before that, living in the Family, it feels like I never actually existed as a human being. I lived in what seems now a dream, a fiendish game in which the rules were thought to be known but were always changing faster than I could follow - a dangerous world of constant uncertainty and subliminal terror.

The staff at Allambie were surprised that whenever an adult approached one of us we would, despite ourselves, cower and cover our faces with an arm to protect our heads. It was a reflex, conditioned by years of being expected to be hit by every adult we knew. It took us a long time not to flinch in the presence of an adult.

Allambie was a State Government reception centre used to temporarily house children under the age of fourteen seen to be at risk of either committing criminal offences or of being physically or psychologically abused. Community Services Victoria were in control of us there. Allambie was in Box Hill and it no longer exists as such. There were about one hundred children there when we lived there, all waiting for court cases or for more permanent placement.

I had made it very clear to all the case-workers how important I thought it was that we all stay together, even before the raid, and they had agreed to the unique solution of putting us all in one unit. If the authorities at Allambie had not extended themselves and agreed to this unusual situation, we ordinarily would have been split up, because most of us were much older than fourteen, and the system did not generally cope with such a large family group. Perhaps some of the younger children would have been put into Allambie but the older girls would have gone to Winlaton and the boys to Turana.

Generally those young people placed at Winlaton or Turana are street-kids or young criminals: it would have been a disaster for us, in the delicate psychological state we were in, to have ended up there. I am very thankful that we were allowed to stay together in those early days. I am convinced that without each other's support, the relative isolation of a secure unit just for us and the intensive support of the Allambie staff assigned to look after us, we would not have made it to where we are now.

The time at Allambie was a time of great change and turmoil, but also of great excitement and

discovery. For the first time in our lives, we were allowed to be kids, with no punishment, restrictions or censorship.

The day after we arrived David crept into the kitchen. Some of the staff were sitting around and saw him looking at the fridge. "You can open it," they said. The fridge was packed full of delicious and previously forbidden food: what we had called Uptop 'Aunty food'. "You can have anything you want from in there," someone said. I will never forget the look on his face, as he gazed into that fridge and realised he was free.

I remember watching David the first time he got on a bike. There were many 'firsts' like this and it was wonderful to see joy on the faces of my younger "brothers and sisters". They were finally getting to experience the happiness that comes from ordinary things, the things normal kids take for granted.

Being allowed to go for a swim at the beach, to use the playground equipment, to make noise if they wanted. They discovered pocket-money, and going into a shop to buy lollies. The littler ones gorged themselves on lollies for the first few weeks. They were finally allowed to eat what they liked and when they liked: on our first morning we discovered Coco Pops.

We at long last got to experience things that other children had when growing up: the joy of rolling down a grassy hill, visits to Luna Park and the beach, watching cartoons on television in the morning, picnics, a ride on Puffing Billy, shopping trips to the city. We caught up on all the celebrations we had missed by having heaps of birthday parties at Allambie, with balloons and streamers, cakes and chocolates and lollies. And finally we had grown-ups around us who cared for us and took an interest in us.

I am not saying that the Allambie staff did not have any troubles. Although the majority of our staff were loving, caring and warm human beings who were very good at working with disturbed kids, at first they had to get over the hurdle of viewing us as freaks: with our strange habits and identical blond hair, and all that they were learning about our background. But we adapted incredibly quickly, and once they got to know us, many close relationships were established. In fact, the kids became closer to some of the staff and police in a couple of weeks than we ever had been to any of the Aunties.

Those first few weeks at Allambie were frantic. The story was all over the media and a crowd of reporters surged around the gates, trying all sorts of novel ways of getting to speak to us or to someone about us. So called 'experts' sprung up on radio and television programs overnight, purporting to know us and describing what supposedly went on at Uptop. Of course, no-one knew anything at that stage apart from what a few ex-sect members had said in previous interviews, so what was being reported about us and our lives was wildly off-beam. It might have been funny to sit before the television and listen to a totally wrong yet salacious account of what we looked like from a private detective none of us had ever seen nor heard of before, who had appointed herself an expert on the case. She said that she had gone up to Lake Eildon when we were young and exposed her breasts to entice us to come down to the water's edge. Unfortunately it was too close to the bone to be funny at the time.

We knew we were freaks, as we had always thought we would be. None of it- the Raid or the attention - surprised us at a deep level. Anne had raised us as a 'scientific experiment' and to believe we were not like everyone else. Now here was the whole world saying so. But we stayed quiet.

The last thing any of us wanted to do was talk to the media, even though we were angry at the inaccuracies. Also we were in the middle of the court cases for Protection Applications which would see us formally taken from the custody of Anne and Bill on the grounds of physical, emotional and psychological danger, and put into the care of the State.

And the two youngest children, Cassandra and David started to grow at a rapid rate. Cassandra, although she was probably around twelve years of age at that time, was the size of a five year old. She was under four foot tall and weighed under three stone. With her blond hair and pigtails, she looked like a small child. She, and to a lesser degree David, was suffering from what in medical terms is known as 'psychosocial short stature'. This is a condition of failed growth which occurs in children who have been so psychologically or physically harassed during their development that they fail to produce the growth hormone required. As soon as they get out of the poor environment they start to produce growth hormone in the normal amounts. Cassandra, from being twelve cm shorter than 99% of children her age when we left Eildon, grew a massive eleven cm in that first year, with a growth spurt that put her rate of growth off the charts. To achieve this growth velocity she received no other treatment than re-establishing herself in a normal community, no pills nor potions apart from care and affection and a normal diet.

The bleach started to grow out of the kids' hair. Some even went and got it dyed dark black within a week or so of being at Allambie. No-one wanted to be a blond freak from a bizarre sect. Even now, even today, every one of us tries to hide from what we were, to deny the reality of our past, as it is not compatible with surviving and adapting to the present.

The younger ones started to cultivate Australian accents, for we still stood out with our plum-in-the-mouth vowels and quaint figures of speech. The thing we wanted most passionately in the world was to blend in and be normal. We were sick of being different. The children wanted to fit in at school. They changed their names and denied being Hamilton-Byrnes if challenged. To this day, at the time of writing, six years after leaving the sect, I am the only one that retains that surname.

I keep the name Hamilton-Byrne for complicated reasons. First, I keep it because it is my name and to change it would be, for me, to admit in some kind of a way that the sect had won. I don't want to change my name just because now it's no longer acceptable to be a Hamilton-Byrne. They changed my name twice when I was a baby as well as my birth-date and age. When I became Sarah Hamilton-Byrne I felt I was somebody. I finally felt I had an identity. I felt it was me and to change it again now would be like saying they still can force me to hide myself. I know I've probably made it harder on myself by keeping it, but I am not yet ready to change. To change also would be to deny my past: that is me and part of what I am about. I can never totally ignore it, never run away from it - I am a Hamilton-Byrne with all that entails.

As I explained before, only some managed to survive at school. The younger ones were the luckiest, as they were young enough to have the capacity to adapt best to the school system. I know I would not have coped at school, and I continued with Year Twelve though correspondence at Allambie. I used to go up to an abandoned floor and try to study in the relative quiet up there.

The police were around at Allambie nearly every day, interviewing us. Things were not always easy for the children: the vast changes took their toll psychologically, and here the system let us down a bit. Before the raid, the authorities had agreed that there needed to be intensive individual counselling and debriefing for all of us.

This never happened, although the authorities did bring in a psychologist who saw us for group counselling - something that, if they had thought about it, they would have realised inevitably would fail. We were children brought up to mistrust every one, even each other. We were hardly going to talk in a group situation about how we felt to a stranger, no matter how well-intentioned.

Also, I don't think we ourselves knew what we felt. People who knew us then say we had the emotional capacity of two-year olds. We didn't even know that people - and especially children, from whom shows of emotion had been forbidden - had feelings. We couldn't even define our

own feelings, or realise that we were having them, let alone discuss them with others. Despite learning a little bit of trust, we were still afraid of adults. It has taken a very long time for us to recover from this basic mistrust and suspicion; I think for some of us it continues.

Counsellors and social workers never helped heal this. It was only through finding friendship and love outside the welfare system that individually we learnt to become human and found the secret of happiness in the outside world.

To some extent I am now ambivalent about Anne. I think she's more sick than evil. I actually felt sorry for her, seeing her being led away in handcuffs, when the task force extradited her from the USA.

Despite everything I don't want to see her suffer. There's no real reason to see her suffer. Revenge isn't a motivating factor. You can't live your life like that, hoping to see people punished for their actions. To a degree her actions are now largely irrelevant. I suppose what I am saying is that I have forgiven Anne.

The only time I ever feel angry at Anne now is sometimes when I look around at the other kids and see that they are having problems. I get angry that she won't tell Cassandra who she is: that she still insists that Cassandra is her natural daughter. I find it unforgivable to withhold someone's identity from them. I know how much harder it would have been for me if I didn't know who I was.

In the early days after leaving the sect, when the kids were having a lot of problems, I used to become very angry with Anne. Sometimes they felt so lonely and isolated and they couldn't understand the outside world. The only life we'd known was filled with abuse. As well I will continue to denounce her and protest what she has done, both to us children and to many others in the sect that she runs. Even though I forgive her for what she did, I will never cease to denounce it as wrong, and I will continue to try to expose her so that she will hopefully not be able to get away with hurting others in the future. I feel a deep sense of outrage at what she has done to others in the name of spirituality and religion. Anne uses religion for monetary gain and for personal satisfaction. She seems to take delight in causing suffering to other people. Destroying life and liveliness in other people is perhaps the true definition of evil in my mind.

I am not sure what I feel about her now. Although I cannot hate her, and even sometimes wish we could sort things out and be a family again, I don't believe in her any more. My belief in her power and the strength of her preaching has been shattered. I know her for what she is.

I know that I do not want her hatred and I do not hate her. Hate is empty and useless and eats you up. I want to show her I survived despite her, and to prove that I can find happiness and personal fulfilment and a belief in myself. These are all now coming to fruition in my life and that is far more important than hate or revenge.

Sometimes I wish that maybe one day we could all sit around a table together and share a cup of tea and put all the negative emotions behind us. Perhaps she still has a little power over me. Secretly, maybe I still love her. I don't know.

If she walked into my life now and said "I love you Sarah and I want you to come back and be part of the Family" I wouldn't do it. But I would have a hard time telling her that. I'd try to I suppose, but she looms so large in my life. The mother you never had, the mother you craved. She was all there was.

Seeing her sent to prison doesn't do anything for me, except make me feel sad: sad for her as well as for me and for all the others. It solves nothing. It certainly doesn't make what we suffered as children go away. I see an old woman now when I look at her.



I saw her on television after the FBI arrested her. She'd been in the bath when they burst into the house and she hadn't had time to fix herself up. She just looked like a pathetic, scared old woman. Maybe the fact that I could see her like that means that her power over me is lessening, I don't know.

What was the legacy that came from being the children of Anne Hamilton-Byrne, that came from being part of the Family? Why was it hard for me to adapt to the outside world, and why is there that gulf of pain within all of us that will never quite go away? The physical abuse is part of the answer, but the psychological and spiritual ramifications continue also. We were children that lived in a world of deception, lies and inconsistencies. We were children that had been hurt repeatedly and punished often for things that were not clear. We were led to believe that we were inherently unworthy just by being born: that is a conviction that is hard to annul. The feelings of fear and mistrust in others, an automatic assumption that others are going to attempt to hurt and be cruel and let you down, is another legacy of our past. I think there also may be an inability to love, although some of us are starting to overcome this. Add to that a well-ingested sense of self-loathing, absorbed from years of being told that we were horrid, and feelings of worthlessness and shame, and of irrational guilt. There is a sense of powerlessness that was a pervading one of our childhood that is hard too to shake off, an assumption that bad things will happen no matter what you do to avoid them, and there is little you can do to change that fact. There is also a feeling of a lack of belonging to the outside world, a sense that it is too difficult to cope out here.

It is not easy to convey my life to people. Sometimes, when strangers who know something of me, say things like "It can't have been all that bad: look at you now", I get angry. What do people want of us? Do they want us to be failures? Why would it make more sense if I were a failure?

The fact that my childhood has not ruined me has nothing to do with the severity of it. Do people think that unless you are unable to cope with life now, you must be lying about your childhood? Do they think that I am making it all up?

Often I find myself avoiding saying anything about it when people ask, especially if they ask silly questions. It's easier that way. Most of the other kids have similar reactions, so it ends up that there are a few people we can trust, who have been there from the beginning and to whom we don't have to explain the whole thing, and the rest we don't bother with. Where do you begin with strangers?

Others, particularly now that I am doing well, see my name and assume that I am still part of the sect. So I'm fighting my past on two fronts. There are people who are saying that I am not enough of a failure, and there are those who think I'm active within the sect. All because I am succeeding in life rather than playing the victim. You can't win. Perhaps one day I will change my name. The time will come I think. Because my past was so bizarre, it is almost surreal to me now. I still find myself sometimes trying hard to work out what reality is and what I am. Because of that and because of the constant doses of tranquillisers they fed us, maybe I haven't remembered every detail. Yet I have told the truth as best I can.

I know Anne Hamilton-Byrne and her followers will deny it all. They will say I'm lying or I'm mad. I can't worry about that. I must simply tell the truth and that is what I have done.

Even now many years on, scenes from those days sometimes intrude in my dreams and I wake up at night in a fright thinking I am still at Utop. Or in the children's wards at the hospital when I hear a child screaming, sometimes my mind flashes back to Utop and I get filled with irrational anxiety. I have to make an effort to calm myself and say 'It's all right now, it's over. It is only a dream'. It takes a very long time to put that past behind you, and to totally forget what happened; I think bits of it will occasionally haunt my dreams and echo in my life forever, despite how well I appear to adapt to life in the outside world.

We live apart now, although we see each other often. We get together for birthdays, holidays and special events and drop round to each other's houses for visits pretty often. Every year on August 14th, the day of that fateful police raid on Uptop, we celebrate our Freedom Day. We try to keep in touch with and support each other as best as we can.

We care about each other and worry about each other like a normal family. We will always love each other despite everything. We consider ourselves brothers and sisters because we shared a childhood together. Our experience has meant that only we can really understand each other. Only we will know the full story, the things that cannot be told or explained in an account such as this.

There are many inadequacies of communication, many old resentments and guilts, as there are in every family. But only we will ever know and understand in each other the gulf of need and pain that was the legacy of our upbringing. And maybe only we can help each other in the healing of that hurt.

A police task force, called Operation Forest, was set up after yet another media outburst about our case, about a year and a half after the raid. Its task was specifically to investigate The Family. There were several court cases during those early years, usually just before exams or at other awkward times for me.

Marie and I both received death-threats after a media interview, and the police arrested the sect member who threatened us and charged him. He ended up pleading guilty to a lesser charge of threats to cause actual bodily harm and got a very light penalty, a suspended jail sentence. That didn't make trying to get to sleep at night any easier.

The sect also tried to sue Channel Nine for Marie's stories, but backed out before it finally got to court when they saw the evidence against them that would go public.

But there was to be no justice for what had happened to us. Most of the abuse was under statutory limitation, which meant that charges could not be laid because a certain period of time had elapsed after they had occurred. The only offences the police ended up charging Anne and her cronies with were connected with frauds involved in securing our false birth-certificates and passports. I will never understand just why it ended up like that; maybe I am naive about the system and don't know how things work, but it looks to me like the whole thing was handled badly from beginning to end. Let me be in a hurry to add that I certainly do not blame the individual police officers concerned for what has happened in the inquiry.

Although the justice system let us down, I have nothing but praise for the police who were involved in our case. They were caring and diligent and worked long and hard at an incredibly complex case. Several of them gave us much needed support and assistance on a personal level as well. The strain of working on such a bizarre and draining case took its toll at times on all the police involved.

It took a lot of time for some of us to accept that there was never going to be any form of retribution for all the years of abuse.

But to get on with life, it has to be accepted that things are not always fair. I choose the path of not wasting energy on bitterness at the system or hatred at Anne for what she and her minions have done to me. I prefer to forgive and forget. I know the greatest way I can be compensated for and to triumph over my childhood is to succeed in what I am now doing: living life fully and learning what it is to be happy.

If I can do that, I will have won and they will have lost. If I can achieve happiness, I will have gained far more for myself than any court case or retribution ever would. For then I will have transcended the legacy of being raised in The Family. I will have transcended the legacy of

being a Hamilton-Byrne.

*Unseen, Unheard, Unknown* was written by Sarah Moore (Hamilton-Byrne) and published by Penguin Books Australia Ltd in 1995. While the book is currently out of print, [Amazon.com](#) will take an order and will search for a used copy. She is currently working on a PhD in Psychoanalytic Theory.

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