

The Bindelof Sitter Group and Its Influence on the Lives of the Participants

MONTAGUE ULLMAN

ABSTRACT: Over a period of about a year and a half, from the autumn of 1932 to the spring of 1934, a group of adolescent boys, all about 16 at the onset, began to hold regular weekly sittings in the classical tradition of sitting around a table, holding hands in a darkened room. There had been sporadic sittings in 1931 that were initiated by Gil and Len, who were soon joined by Larry. I joined in the autumn of 1932 and was followed by Howard, George, Tom, and others less regularly. During the period in question, physical manifestations occurred in a gradual fashion that convinced us that we were dealing with genuine psychic phenomena and that an intelligent force had been brought into play. From early dubious knocks and movements of the table we progressed to rapid movement of the table around the room and finally levitation. Psychic photographs were obtained by placing objects on a film enclosed in a light proof container. This led to thought photography and finally, and most spectacularly, a series of written messages when pencil and paper were placed on the lower shelf of a night table around which we were sitting with our hands resting on the top of the table. The messages were in answer to questions a group of teenagers might put to what seemed to be a surviving entity of some kind. The various ways in which the participants were affected by the experiences then and in later years are described. In addition, meticulous records made at reunions of the group in 1966, 1969, and 1971 have been compiled and presented to illuminate the longitudinal, long-term aftereffects of our original one and one-half year sitter-group experience.

PREFACE TO THIS VERSION

Seventy years have passed since my introduction to the world of psychic phenomena and the striking manifestations that unfolded over the ensuing two years. In retrospect, this was the most sustained exciting period of my life. These phenomena and manifestations also determined my dual path through life as a parapsychologist as well as a psychiatrist. There are four of us from the original circle still around, all hovering a bit over our mid-eighties; Gil, Larry, Howard, and myself. None of us ever doubted the

I want to express my indebtedness to Rhea A. White for the initiative she took in regard to publishing this account in *The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*. It was no easy task for her to link the referee reports and the vast amount of accrued data to the actual experiences themselves. It has long been my hope that such a unified account would someday be available. No one but Rhea could have done it.

I also want to thank Dr. Nancy Sondow for the considerable help she offered in the preparation of the manuscript for publication and Dr. Suzanne V. Brown for her very skillful editing.

This is the first full record published in a single issue. An earlier version spanning four parts and correspondence between the author and Rhea White was published in *Exceptional Human Experience*: Vol. 11(1), 1993; Vol. 12(1) and 12(2), 1994, and Vol. 13(1), 1995.

genuineness of what we witnessed. As noted in the account, explanations differed or, as in my case, simply eluded us.

As "psychic phenomena" evolved into scientific parapsychology, séances and their associated phenomena fell out of fashion except for sporadic reminders (Batchelder, 1966 on séances; Owens, 1964 on poltergeists; Eisenbud, 1989 on psychic photography). Parapsychologists have had a hard time gaining admission to the scientific pantheon. There are, however, beginning signs that cracks are occurring in the rejectionist wall of science with regard to the efforts of parapsychologists. Distinguished theoretical physicists such as Paul Davies (1983) and John C. Polkinghorne (1994) have sought to bridge the gap between science and theology to reach a deeper understanding of what is real. Harold E. Puthoff's (2002) studies on zero-point energy suggest a link to the paranormal. Stanley Klein (2002), in introducing metaphor into the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, offers a manner that may link the basis of science to that of the spiritual world. David Bohm (1986), in introducing the concepts of information and meaning into the equations of quantum mechanics, saw a possible approach to understanding the paranormal.

My own quest for a deeper understanding of the enduring mystery of dreaming consciousness has brought me closer to both worlds, the quantum world and the spiritual world. Quantum concepts such as complementarity, nonlocality, the unity of the observer and observed have their analogy to the opposite but not oppositional relationship of waking consciousness to dreaming consciousness, the occurrence of nonlocal telepathic effects, and the identity of the dreamer with what is being dreamt.

My thirty years of experiential group dream work resulted in a deeply felt sense of what is meant by such terms as *communion* and *spirituality*. I never thought that science and theology would find a point of convergence in my life. It took a long time but it has, not in terms of any formal religious belief, but in a conviction that science will have to go beyond what is measurable to a deeper concern with the subtle threads that generate a hidden but palpable interconnectedness. There must an unknown source of energy which given the right intensity of that interconnectedness, can make a table levitate, generate a thought photograph, or get a pencil to write with no one holding it.

That's what happened when we sat together in the dark.

Part I: Overview and Background

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 1932 and extending to early 1934, I participated in a series of séances productive of what at the time I thought to be true psychic phenomena and what I still believe, from a perspective taken 70 years later, were true psi effects. Because of the circumstances under which these

The Bindelof Sitter Group

effects occurred (we were a group of youngsters then, 16 and 17 years old, sitting around a table in a darkened room, witnessing strange happenings and unconcerned with proving anything) there is no way I can justify my belief in their validity in the light of the rigorous lengths to which the modern parapsychologist goes to exclude fraud. Here and there I can offer some intriguing evidence that might raise the eyebrow of even a skeptic, but that isn't the point. The point is, rather, that these were exceptional human experiences that had a lasting effect on the lives of the participants, an effect that was validated some three decades later at reunions, and in the case of the four surviving members of the group, seven decades later.

There were a number of lingering reservations I had that had to be overcome before I was prepared to offer a full public exposure of these events. My own long association with parapsychologists made me acutely aware of how vulnerable this account would be to any critical appraisal of the residual evidence. After all, couldn't it just be written off as the highjinks of a group of adolescents who, in their grandiosity, heated imagination, and stimulated by their reading about the exploits of Florence Cook, Eusapia Palladino, D.D. Home, and the like, were hell-bent on recreating the world of psychic phenomena that had all but disappeared? I knew I lacked the literary skills necessary to bring back the excitement, the fun, the moments of fear, the passion and commitment we felt that kept us at it every Saturday evening for well over a year. We could hardly keep it to ourselves. Friends, including girl friends, joined us to the point where that small room where the séances were held was often quite crowded.

There are a number of other reasons why it has taken me so long to face the task of organizing and presenting the material I had on hand. I made two attempts involving other writers to incorporate the data into a fictional recreation of the events. Both were failures. With the death of one of the participants, Leonard, who played an important role from the very beginning to the termination of the sittings, and who later in life became a close and dear friend, I finally faced the reality that if a serious and straightforward account were ever to appear (as straight as any honest effort at reconstruction could be, with due allowance for the vicissitudes of memory), I would have to undertake it myself in consultation with the three others still alive at this writing.

These earlier experiences never left me and obviously had a great effect on my life and my career. I will go into this in greater detail at the end, but for the present, suffice it to say that I tried to rekindle this interest at varying stages of my life. It paved the way for my later clinical and experimental studies in parapsychology and resulted in the unending and lifelong search I have felt compelled to pursue to accommodate these strange and "unworldly" experiences to the world of consensual reality. I know that the others who participated were also deeply affected and carried the experience with them throughout their lives.

I want to say a word more about the impetus of Rhea White's writings about exceptional human experience and her efforts to broaden our vision

and the range of our interests if we are ever to arrive at, to use a current idiom, a consciousness-friendly science that will ultimately accommodate psi and the full range of human subjectivity. This was the structure I needed to cast aside the last remaining obstacles to the task of keeping the record straight.

In the spring of 1966 I sent letters to five members of the core group suggesting that sometime that summer we arrange to meet for the purpose of reminiscing. The events linking these men and myself had occurred over three decades earlier. The purpose of the meeting was to compare our recollections of these events, to mutually assist each other in filling gaps where possible, to establish areas of consensual agreement as to what took place, as well as to define those aspects of the experience where the passage of time rendered any semblance of accurate reconstruction impossible. The events in question were extraordinary both at the time they occurred and in their lasting impact over the years. All the invitees responded affirmatively.

The result was a Sunday devoted to the boisterous, excited recapturing of what for each of us was probably the strangest and most powerful experience of our youth. The proceedings were taped and duly transcribed. Similar meetings took place in 1969 and 1971,¹ again with the idea of marshaling the residual physical evidence that something of paranormal significance did occur and to sift these data through the screen of our mutual reminiscences. From the perspective of whatever maturity and wisdom comes with middle age (at that time), we sought to come to some consensus as to what had actually happened.

The "happenings" I refer to occurred in the course of séances assiduously conducted at weekly intervals beginning in 1932² and continuing through 1933, terminating in the spring of 1934 when the group finally disbanded. What we witnessed over this period was the gradual and ultimately climactic unfolding of almost the full gamut of psychical phenomena as they were known and defined by writers on the subject in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The developmental sequence began with equivocal movements, tilting of the table and knocks, and ultimately went to such startling phenomena as the table moving about the room and actual levitation, photographs taken without exposure of the plates, and messages appearing on paper with no one holding the pencil, purportedly written by someone [Dr. Bindelof, to be described later] who had died years before. Heady stuff for a group of 16 and 17 year olds! Either that or mere foolishness and nonsense.

There were many reasons why none of us thought it was foolishness, either then or at any later point in our lives. Any differences among us had to do with our various ways of interpreting our experiences and not with the fact that we were witnessing genuine psychic phenomena. We could

¹Howard was not present at those meetings. Gil, Leonard, Larry, George, and I attended.

²There had been sporadic sittings before that time and prior to the time I joined the group.

These will be noted later.

neither explain it away or consider what at the time of our get-together in 1966 would have been a 33-year sustained fraud, joke, or other form of deception by any member of the group or any combination thereof. As of this writing it has now been 70 years, and the conviction of the psychic reality of our experience has remained unshaken.

I am fully aware, of course, that the issue of authenticity is crucial. We had not embarked upon our adventure with the idea of setting down elaborate controls with the conscious intent of eliminating fraud or deception. Quite to the contrary, the excitement and freedom with which we set out to reproduce phenomena we had read about and the quality of fun and near hilarious release we experienced in the pauses between periods of sitting (along with at times fright and even terror) offered many opportunities for deception had anyone been so inclined. The perpetrator of such a fraud would have found himself face to face with an enormous undertaking. He would have had to control the situation on a weekly basis over a very long period of time. Inasmuch as on many occasions the direction the sittings took was only determined after the lights went out, he would have faced the near impossible task of having a very wide variety of difficult tricks to pull out of his bag without any notice. Once the sittings were fully developed, phenomena such as rappings, written messages, and photographic plates could characterize any one sitting. The hoaxer, or the hoaxing team, would have to have been willing to endure many unproductive, wasted evenings where nothing much happened. Toward what end? Toward what personal gain? No one ended up as a professional magician or a professional medium. No one except me ended up in a field even remotely connected with psychical research. Although our youthful experiences and the impact on our lives over the decades might make an interesting story, taken alone they are not likely to convince even someone only mildly skeptical. There is, however, more to the story than our mere description of the events. There are strange features to the original photographs which are still extant, as well as something most unusual about at least one of the messages, to which I can attest.

If, after reading the entire account, the reader still doubts its authenticity, there would be no way at this late date of changing his or her mind. For me, taking into account the enduring feeling of reality I have had about these events and the impact they have had on my life and the lives of the others, they stand as striking examples of the range of the paranormal. I cannot conceive of any one of us, in either a spirit of conscious deception or unconscious self-deception, having the skill and ability to develop the florid panorama of phenomena that unfolded before us as the sittings progressed over a two-year period in those early days. Moreover, I cannot conceive of that person decades later engaging with the rest of us in our reconstructive efforts without at any point doing or saying anything that would lead anyone to be even vaguely suspicious. (I am assuming the perpetrator of this was not myself.)

What possible motive could anyone have, assuming it was a hoax, for

maintaining this pose among old friends for so long? Someone would have had to be a consummate artist to have relived the experience as each of us did once the reconstruction efforts began and so dissemble his feelings that no one could suspect the experience was not as genuine for him as it was for the rest of us, both at the time it occurred and in the reliving of it. When the group did get together in later years, there was a cohesiveness, a congeniality, an easy unspoken understanding, an excitement, and at times the same old joy and hilarity at the recall of certain incidents so that the idea of a lull among us was impossible for us to conceive. We had all gone along very different paths which, in the ordinary course of events, would never again have crossed were it not due to the recurrent pull of the special tie that made us and kept us a group.³

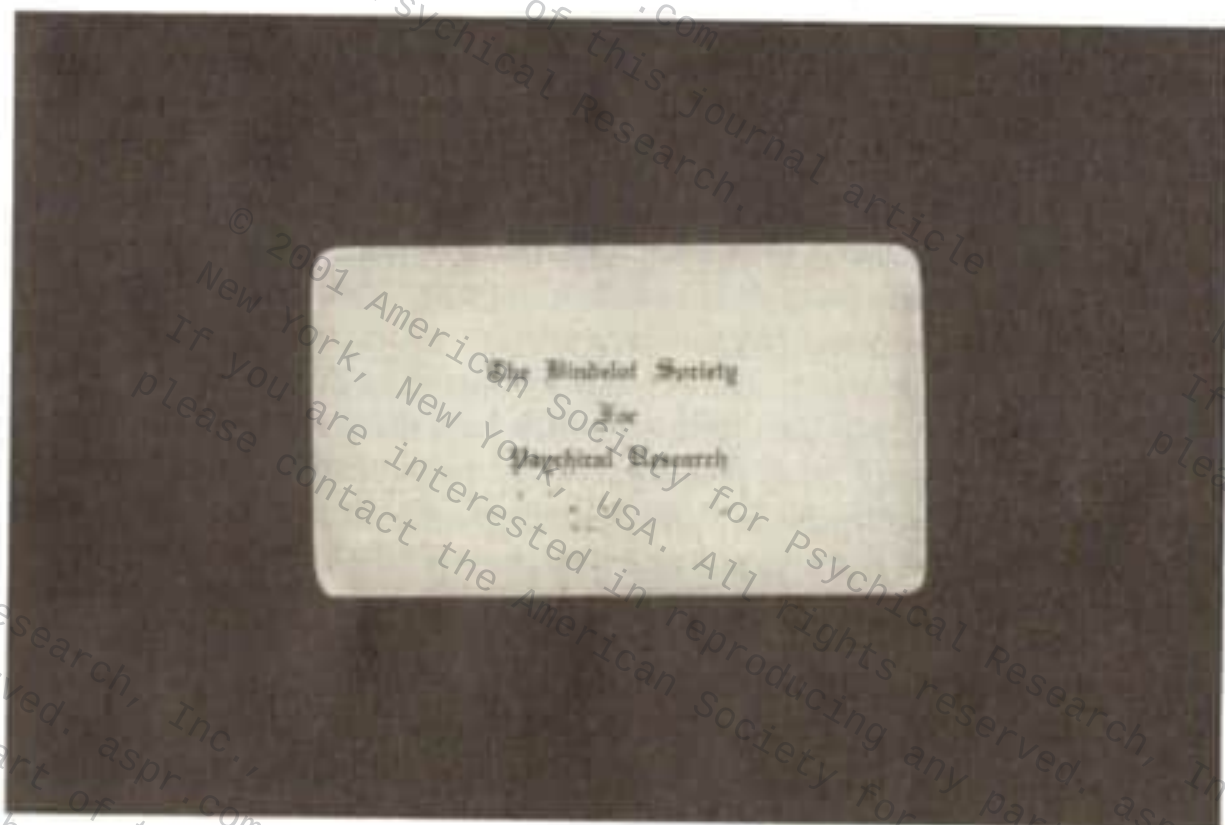


Fig. 1. A copy of Monte's original Bindelof Society calling card.

In 1966 I received a small grant to initiate a serious effort at the reconstruction of what we had been through together. This had been a long-standing hope of mine that had been set aside in the pursuit of my career in the practice and teaching of psychoanalysis. With a switch to full-time hospital work in 1961 at the Maimonides Medical Center, I had the opportunity to pursue my own research interests. In 1946 there had been an abortive attempt to reconstitute the group for the purpose of

In 1933, we decided to call ourselves the Bindelof Society in honor of the purported entity who announced his presence at one of our sittings. Larry and I had calling cards made at the time which simply said, "The Bindelof Society for Psychical Research." I have carried one in my wallet ever since. A copy of my original is reproduced in Figure 1.

holding séances to try to recapture some of the phenomena known to us in our earlier efforts. When we came together in 1966 it was with the tacit understanding that whatever psychical phenomena we were capable of generating had run its course in our adolescence, and we were now gathered to take a last look at it and to pool our recollections of it in some definitive way. (Yet, as already noted, there were to be subsequent reunions in 1969 and 1971.)

For the first time in 33 years, in 1966 all of the surviving members of the group with the exception of one, Tom, came together. (See Figure 2. A picture of Tom with his grandson taken in 1970 is presented in Figure 3.)



Fig. 2. 1966 Reunion, from left to right: Monte, Larry, Leonard, Howard, George, Gil.

That meeting had a special quality of its own. Despite the diverse paths we had followed in life we congealed into a unity that transcended both time and our differing interests and lifestyles. There we were, presumably at a mature and settled stage of our own lives, unabashedly owning up to being mixed-up, unhappy adolescents, each with a full quota of personal hang-ups at the time the sittings took place. One of us [Leonard] was the most outspoken in his discussion of himself as a 16-year-old, but had the others been equally as frank, it would have been obvious that the quality of adolescent disarray spared none of us. Taken as a whole we were floundering, confused, searching, much in need of a stabilizing influence, and

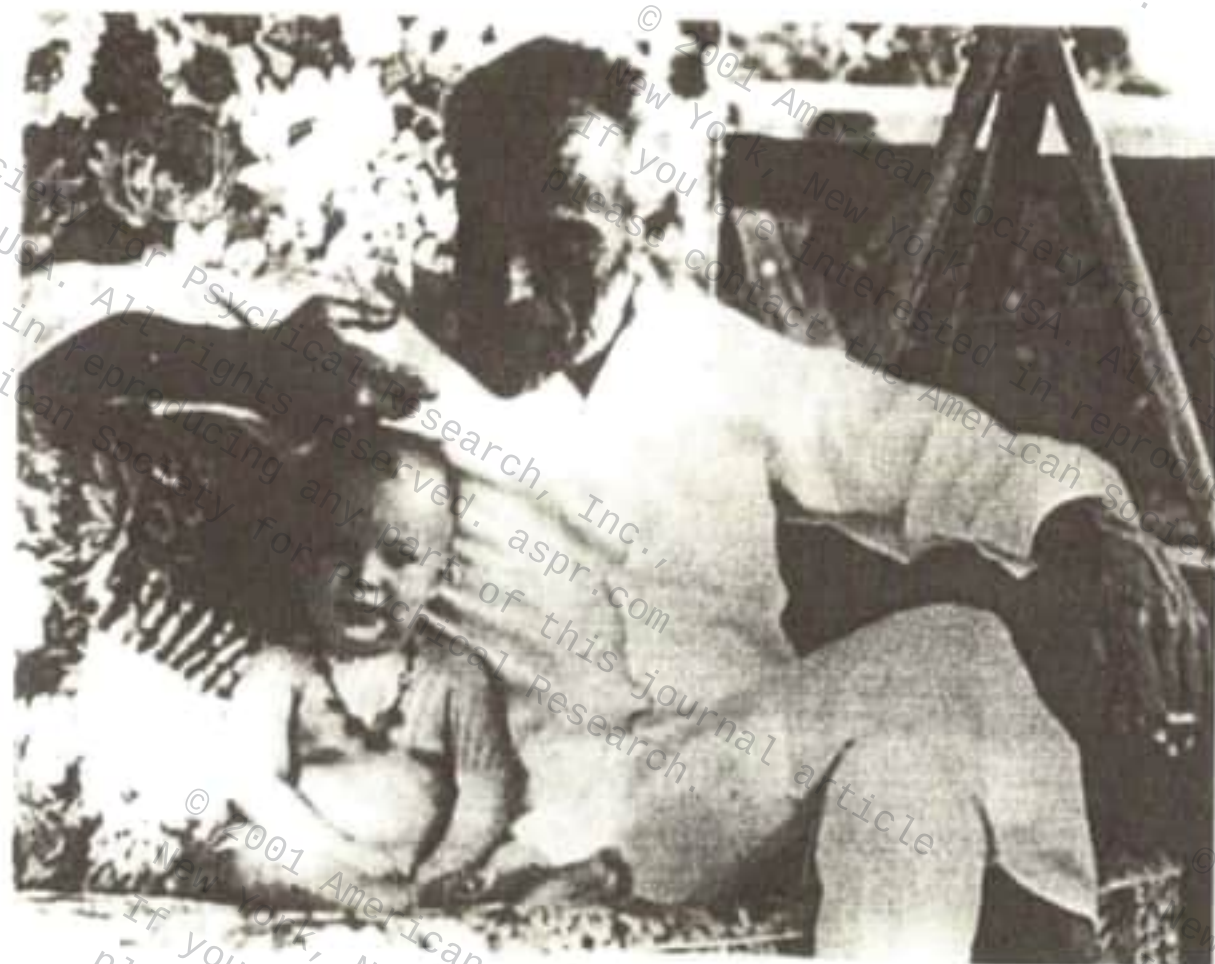


Fig. 3. Tom with his grandson, c. 1970.

individually beset by all the perturbations and excesses that characterize most adolescents, ranging from insufferable vanity and arrogance to passionate self-pity and despair. For some of us the sittings helped in the search for a father figure. For others it offered the comfort, security, and stimulation of a new home away from home, of new and exciting parents in place of the dull and familiar ones. The home in which most of the sittings took place [Gilbert's] had much that was lacking in the homes of the rest of us. Music and books came to life there in a different way than I had ever experienced before.

This was the emotional climate that shaped all that occurred and perhaps even created much that did occur. But not all. Of that we were, still are, and as far as I can see, always will be convinced. It is in the nature of this particular group to agree on little else as we were extremely individual in outlook. What united us was the conviction that something significantly paranormal did occur. We have remained united about this even though we may differ about the way we individually interpreted the nature of the paranormal experience itself.

During this and the subsequent meetings in 1969 and 1971 we continued to assess the material on hand. Despite the gaps and flaws in our memory we soon realized how much material we did have available. Most of the written messages had been preserved, as had the original photographs. I

The Bindelof Sitter Group

still had in my possession the photographic plates in various stages of decay. As the caretaker of the records, I also had the minutes I had kept and the agendas I prepared in advance of the meetings; agendas which, incidentally, rarely unfolded as planned once things got going. In addition to these actual "products" of the sittings there were a number of written accounts, one by myself in the spring of 1933, one by Larry in 1934, another by myself in 1946, and one by Howard in 1966. A later account was written by Leonard in 1985. Subsequent to the reunions, I had an interview with one of the original sitters [Tom] whose whereabouts was not known in 1966 and obtained statements from several others who participated at various times in the sittings.

Many skeletons were rattled in the course of these get-togethers, but one in particular was not easy for me to get out of the closet. It centered around the task of finally going public with these strange youthful adventures. Although I did not hesitate to give a full account of these happenings in intimate and very personal settings, it was many years before I overcame my own resistance to going further. Early in my career there was some concern with how my colleagues in psychiatry would react to something so beyond their own experience. Later on, as I became more identified with parapsychology, I had misgivings about its reception by those eager young scientists so determined to statistically prove the reality of psi through fool-proof laboratory techniques.

My fellow sitters did not share these concerns, but each of us has had to settle accounts with this part of our past. It was as if we had been living with these skeletons (or ghosts) in our respective closets, opening them to view only under very special circumstances. Those closet doors kept opening in different ways to be sure, for each of us, but speaking for myself, they never stayed open too long for fear of rebuff or ridicule. The going process, my conviction about their authenticity, the response of Gardner Murphy to hearing about them in the 1940s and to his reading of the unedited transcript of our 1966 meeting all revived my interest in seeing that a public record should be available.

My earlier efforts to embed the actual happenings in a fictionalized account had failed. In retrospect, I'm glad it turned out that way. Having it coauthored would simply have been an expeditious way of getting something out before I had the time and leisure to get to it myself. Had it been successfully fictionalized, it would have reached a wider audience, but the direction I saw this taking, particularly with regard to the second attempt, made me feel that the embellishments were too high a price to pay. My deepest desire is to present it in my own voice and to assume the responsibility for staying as close to the facts as possible. As I noted earlier, it was Rhea White's openness and point of view of psi in the place of things that provided me with the stimulus to do it in the way I really wanted to. Here is the outline of the Bindelof monograph proper:

PLAN OF PRESENTATION

Preface to This Version

Part I: Overview and Background

Introduction

The Participants

Roles and Relationships: Then and Now

Gilbert's Poltergeist

Early Sitzings Prior to M. U.

Summary of the Early Days Prior to M. U.

Part II: The Period of My Participation in the Group—Early Days

My Introduction to Psychic Phenomena (1932-1933)

Sources Used in Compiling This Section

Method

Early Results

Evaluative Comments

Part III: The Period of My Participation in the Group—Bindelof Days

Our Encounter with Dr. Bindelof (1933-1934)

Sources Used in Compiling This Section

Description of the Apparatus

Active Phase (September-December 1933)

Termination Phase (January-April 1934)

Commentary

Part IV: The Bindelof Story as a Shared Exceptional Human Experience

Overview of Our Longitudinal, Shared EHE

Sources Used in Compiling This Section

The Core Group Revisited

Self-Deception, Fraud, Collusion?

Dr. Bindelof: Who? What? When?

The Interim (1934-1966)

The Reunions (1966, 1969, 1971)

The Bindelof Experience and Its Life Impact

References

THE PARTICIPANTS

Core Group

Gilbert Roller. Retired television producer and writer (referred to as **Gil** or **Gilbert**).

Leonard Lauer. Deceased; died in 1988. Metal worker and later vice-president of a metallurgical firm (referred to variously as **Leonard**, **Len**, or **Jeff**).

Gilbert Laurence. California businessman, now retired but with a continuing interest in theater (referred to as **Larry** and in the transcripts of the reunions as **Larry Levin**).

The Bindelof Sitter Group

George Keiser. Deceased; died soon after the 1971 reunion. Public relations career.

Howard Frisch. Antiquarian book dealer.

Tom Loeb. Deceased. Poet and into a variety of other undertakings (later referred to as **Tom Newman**).

Montague Ullman. Psychoanalyst, psychiatrist, parapsychologist, and dream researcher (referred to as **Monte** or **M. U.**).

In addition, there were a number of others who participated sporadically:

Leo Keiser. Deceased. Leonard's cousin (referred to as **Lance**) who participated in the pre-1932 series.

Eleanor Turmo. Gilbert's aunt but contemporary with Gilbert in age (referred to as **Ellie**).

Horace Joseph. Engineer, living in California. Attended many of the sittings.

William Weinman. He was a classmate of mine at City College (referred to as **Willie**).

Numerous others attended and their accounts will be noted in appropriate sections.

ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS: THEN AND NOW

Gilbert Roller

Gil was the one who had a history of poltergeist, and who started to sit with Larry and Len prior to 1932. His mother was said to have had psychic powers. Although we were of the same age, I recall being impressed by Gil's quick wit and lively imagination. That combination often served to release anxieties and tensions in the group. Knowing of his earlier poltergeist experience, I held him in some awe. I also envied his being more unabashedly open and less inhibited in his behavior than I was. I had no contact with Gil once the seances terminated in 1934 until we tried again to hold sittings in 1946. Then, again, there was a lapse until the reunion in 1966. Since the last reunion in 1971 we have met occasionally socially and in connection with the earlier attempts at preparing an account for publication.

Leonard Lauer

Leonard was a natural leader. Handsome, smart, and self-confident, he was a steady hand in the group and generally acted as spokesperson. He was also knowledgeable about the literature of psychical research and the one I knew most about as our friendship continued to grow over the years. It actually began in our childhood when we were both members of a boys

club that met for outings in Van Cortlandt Park on Saturday mornings. It was my introduction to football. I played center. Leonard was quarterback, as might be expected. He was a good athlete and could toss a football like a pro. We continued to be casual friends at the three-year high school we attended, but a real friendship didn't develop until we started City College in September of 1931. I had just turned 15. Leonard was a few months older. We were both majoring in science. We had one class together in comparative anatomy where Leonard and I were partners in dissecting the dogfish. He did most of the dissecting. I watched. It was the pattern of our relationship. It was sometime during our second year that Leonard told me of the seances he, Gil, and Larry had been conducting over the prior two-year period. He dropped names like Sir Oliver Lodge, William Crookes, William James, Cesare Lombroso, F. W. H. Myers, and was most insistent that I read *The Law of Psychic Phenomena* by Thomson Jay Hudson (1893/1970), which I did. This was a breathtaking introduction to a whole new world. Considering my reverence for the printed word, Hudson's portrayal of the extraordinary powers referring to the subjective mind seemed logical and unassailable. I was hooked. Leonard dropped out of college toward the end of his third year (he completed his degree in his 60s with honors) and went to work as a sheet-metal worker. We lost touch with each other until soon after my return from overseas in 1945. Leonard was now a prosperous executive in the firm he worked for, was married, had a family, and had kept up his varied intellectual pursuits, mainly in the field of psychology. We met from time to time, mostly to talk over odd times. This led to our effort to make another attempt at sitting in 1946.

Much happened in Leonard's life between 1946 and 1966. He suffered from a serious sleep disorder in the form of episodes of sleep apnea. His disturbed sleep led to a tendency to nod off during the day. Driving home one night he fell asleep at the wheel, crashed into a tree, and suffered a fractured jaw, knee, and hip. He remained in traction for many months and was left with a limp and a much altered appearance. His marriage, always a stormy one, ended. He had a second marriage, which also ended in divorce but on friendly terms and where a close and endearing relationship continued up to the time of his death in the summer of 1988.

My feeling toward Leonard in our youth was a mix of admiration and envy. He was much more his own person than I was at the time, freer in his dealings with his parents than I was, and more adventuresome with girls. At a time when necking was still an achievement for me, he told me one day how delightful it was to wake up in the morning with the first sight greeting his eyes being the beautiful brown tresses of the girl he had slept with. I hesitated to introduce him to any girls I was dating, having had more than one fall for him. I was also intrigued by Leonard's mother. She was a very striking looking woman. I saw Leonard's relationship with his mother as two adults respectful of each other's way of life, something quite different from my own situation where my views on religion and psychic phenomena were quite foreign and upsetting to my parents. His mother

(Helen Lauer) participated in the sittings for a short period. I did not know Leonard's father. His parents were separated in his teens, and he rarely spoke of his father.

After a second episode of falling asleep at the wheel and totaling his car, I sent Leonard to a sleep disorder clinic where the diagnosis of sleep apnea was made. From then on he slept using an oxygen tank next to his bed. Leonard enjoyed good food, smoked too much, and finally succumbed to a heart attack.

I continue to miss Leonard. We had hit it off since childhood. I miss his counsel and the help he could have provided in the preparation of this account. His recall was sharper than mine. He never tired of talking about the Bindelof days and took delight in stimulating interest and excitement in the younger generation, particularly his step-daughter, Judith Malamud, now a psychologist. Shortly before he died, she persuaded him to do a taping. He once again recounted the experience.

Leonard and his former wife Rachel lived separately, but kept in close touch, and dined out together several times a week. Leonard often told me their real love for each other began the same day their divorce was granted. Rachel, a brilliant and accomplished woman, was the director of the Straus Thinking and Learning Center at Pace University until her death several years ago. She once told me that Jeff (as he came to be known later in life) was the smartest man she had ever known.

Leonard died alone. To spare Rachel the pain, I was the one to identify the body at the morgue. I broke down.

Larry Devin

Larry was the third member of the original triumvirate. He, along with Gilbert and Leonard, was there from the beginning to the end. A budding actor with an irrepressible sense of humor and a strong ego, it was easy for him to take center stage to the delight of the rest of us. We took frequent respites during a sitting, and Larry's antics took the edge off our tensions. There was, however, a serious side to Larry. I think he was the one most personally moved and affected by our contact with Dr. Bindelof, a purported entity, a physician still interested in healing. One result of our experiments in "psychic photography" was a picture of Dr. Bindelof. To this day Larry still carries that picture in his wallet.

Larry dropped out of high school to join Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theater as an apprentice. After terminating his theatrical career in the East, he moved to California where he was highly successful in a number of business enterprises while remaining actively connected with the theater. Larry and I resumed our friendship on my return from overseas in 1945, when we saw each other on his occasional trips to New York. He has enjoyed his retirement and has kept up his contact with Gilbert as well as myself.

Tom Loeb/Newman

Tom had a wild streak that was evident in the 1930s, and it led him on an adventurous course for the rest of his life. He was a hippie before there were hippies. He was a poet and loved reading aloud to us in a clear resonant voice stanzas from T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland." He was a regular sitter but with not infrequent absences for which he was berated by Dr. Bindelof. He was a free soul, perhaps freer than any of the rest of us. I recall being at his home one day and being amazed at the disdainful way he treated his mother.

We next connected in 1946 when he joined with the others in the sittings that were held then. We corresponded briefly in the late 40s when he was working in New Orleans. I then lost sight of him until 1972 when I relocated him and arranged for a taped interview in Los Angeles. I was shocked by his appearance. He was dying of cancer, emaciated and jaundiced as a result of liver metastases. What was unchanged was that deep resonant voice as he welcomed the opportunity to talk of the Bindelof experience. He had a keen recall of those days.

When I met him in 1972 he was lying on a hospital bed in a small room in a building that housed other members of a commune. In one corner of the room were two large wicker baskets filled with what he insistently declared was the juiciest marijuana anywhere. He spoke of his life in Mexico and listed among his various activities importing marijuana and gunrunning. Tom died a short time later.

Howard Frisch

Howard attended regularly. Possessed of a certain shyness, he was the quietest member of the group. I experienced in him a gentle, thoughtful presence who on occasion displayed a good sense of humor. I knew Howard slightly in grade and high school, and then met him again when I joined the group. He was a good friend of Gil's, and I think this was the basis of his participation rather than any deep interest in the field. Howard's interests were literary. He opened and still maintains an antiquarian book store. While it is a small operation, he has gained a considerable reputation among book dealers for the selection he carries and for his ability to locate long out-of-print books. Howard and I have kept in touch following the first reunion in 1966, and he has been most helpful in finding books where others failed.

George Keiser

He was at very few of the sessions that I attended, and my recollection of him from that time is quite vague. George was a cousin of Leonard's. He died in 1973.

Leo Keiser

Leo was also a cousin of Leonard's. He was active in the group before I came and was there sporadically during the period I was. My recollection of him was also very vague. He died quite young.

There were many others: Ellie, Gilbert's aunt (contemporary with him in age), as well as Horace and Willie, attended a number of sessions. Many others came to visit and/or participate on occasion.

In sum, the friendship of Gilbert and Howard has endured through the years as had the friendship of Leonard and me. Larry had kept up with all of us on his visits to New York once or twice a year. Leonard and Gilbert grew apart and, as far as I know, they had little contact with each other after the last reunion in 1971. This might have been the situation between Leonard and myself also had I not taken the initiative back in the 1940s. He tended to be a self-sufficient kind of guy and very much a loner as far as contacts outside his family and his work. Larry accepted all that happened in the course of the sittings at face value. There was no doubt in his mind but that we had contacted a deceased entity, perhaps even more than one, and that Dr. Bindelof was what he said he was. Leonard and I had questions about the survival nature of what we had come across, but we had no doubt about its genuineness as psychic phenomena. Gil was somewhere in between, believing in the survival of the soul for personal reasons rather than only on the basis of our sittings.

GILBERT'S POLTERGEIST

Because of his earlier poltergeist experiences and his family history we regarded Gilbert as having more mediumistic power than any of the rest of us. Although his presence didn't ensure success at a sitting, I believe we all felt nothing would occur in his absence. I put it that way because I didn't recall his ever being absent. When we got together for our first reunion on July 31, 1966 [Gilbert, Howard, Leonard, Larry, George, and myself], we began with an effort on my part to explore Gil's background and early experiences. The following is taken directly from the transcript. An occasional word is inserted in brackets to make the meaning clear.

Group Interview With Gilbert (July 31, 1966)

Monte: Gil, perhaps you might begin by telling us a little bit about what there was in the way of your own personal family background that sort of helped in initiating this whole experience.

Gil: I would say that the first direct experience I had was this paranormal phenomenon of poltergeist. We had this experience, I think, when I was about 15—probably even earlier than that—I'd say 12 or 13. Somewhere

around that. I don't remember the exact date, but at any rate, there was a very pronounced phenomenon in the house: the usual poltergeist manifestations, that is, objects flying through the air, all sorts of things of that nature, and markings on the walls [in crayon], smashing glass, and various things like that. This was my first direct experience with the phenomenon, although I did know of psychic phenomena through my mother's interest on the subject. That was really my introduction to it, and from there on, of course, I had a permanent interest in it and carried that forward to this day.

Monte: Could you tell us a little bit about what your mother's background in this was?

Gil: Well, my mother established her interest in it through reading about it first. This was her first knowledge of it. Then she sat with the Dolly Sisters;⁴ they were in the show together, and she suggested that they have a séance, and much to their surprise they had almost immediate results—manifestations, and it appeared that one of the Dolly sisters (I think Jenny Dolly, who is now dead—I think they're both dead) was quite mediumistic and had some extremely interesting messages. I really should have brought those. You might have been interested to know about them. They were prophetic messages that came true very accurately; the results were very surprising, and from that day forward, my mother always had an interest in it and spoke to me about it, but as I said, my first direct experience was with poltergeist phenomenon.

Larry: I just want to say that I remember newspaper articles that Gilbert showed me at the time, which was after the occurrences, but this was one of the things that led me to participate when we first started trying to experiment ourselves.

Gil: As a matter of fact, the case did achieve some notoriety because of the violence of it, and as a matter of fact it was investigated by Hereward Carrington, and of course, these things, when they revolve around children, are always suspect and the neighbors were inclined to say that I was a bit of a psychopath, etc. However, the situations which arose could not have involved me because I was absent during some of those phenomena. Carrington investigated this at the request of my mother and he found the phenomenon to be absolutely genuine, and as a matter of fact, some of the most violent demonstrations of the phenomena occurred during his investigations.

Monte: Where did you live at the time?

Gil: We lived on Riverside Drive then—139th Street, and as I say, it was quite an experience because I'd never seen anything like this.

⁴ A vaudeville team Gil's mother was associated with in her youth. Gil later corrects himself and says it was his father. He also corrects himself later about Carrington considering it genuine. In a recent interview (1993) I again queried him about this. He said it was his father who insisted on Carrington coming in. He feels his father, who wanted none of this "psychic business," may have had an influence on Carrington's negative report.

Monte: Did your mother, in her sittings, have physical phenomena?

Gil: Yes. You mean prior to this? Of course, you see we did have séances at the time (my mother and I would sit alone as a matter of fact), and request . . . we called this entity or manifestation or whatever you want to call it—we called it "Liz."

Monte: Can you place this in time?

Gil: Monte, I can't very accurately. I would say I was about 13.

Monte: And you're how old now?

Gil: Fifty-one, which would make this hundreds of years ago, but at any rate . . .

Monte: Around 1928 then . . .

Gil: It's around there—'29, '28. And of course it's a maddening thing because it was affecting our entire life. My stepfather at the time had no patience with this sort of thing; he couldn't comprehend it at all and it made living there extremely difficult. My mother and I would have these impromptu séances and actually request a demonstration of this thing, and whatever we asked . . . We'd say "throw something, and you'd hear this violent projectile going through the air. They were hairpins mostly. My mother had long hair which was fashionable at that time . . . and the arsenal really comprised these hairpins, you see, that she wore, and you could hear the "ping" as it struck the wall and something would tinkle to the floor, and you could find them all over the place, and suddenly a dish would be smashed.

Monte: What were the most striking physical effects?

Gil: Well, the violence of it, and the ability to pull on it. It was almost as though there were an invisible entity in the house and you could say, "Liz, throw something," and this would be acknowledged immediately. And then these huge crayon markings on the wall. There was one message which was quite frequent and the word was "Go." . . . just "Go." "Go," all over the place, and of course, finally we did leave the apartment, we felt that might have been part of the cause of the difficulty, but it was a violent phenomena [sic] and most unusual.

George: Was there specifically a time when you'd be sitting in the bathtub and your mother would be out in the living room and she'd say, "Stop throwing the hairpins."

Gil: Oh, yes. This occurred.

George: And if you [were] around two corners, this would be physically impossible.

Gil: Oh, this was definitely established. You see, unfortunately poltergeist—the classic poltergeist—seems to have a child or adolescent as suspect and this of course, is suspect to the uninitiated.

Monte: Can you recall what your own subjective response to these events was at the time?

Gil: Not particularly, no. I wasn't disturbed by the phenomenon and I don't think I had any particular objection to it, you might say, or repugnance . . . it was just an amusing experience and as a matter of fact, I found

it sort of interesting. Many neighbors came in to observe; it was almost a sideshow, you might say—it was that predictable.

Monte: Was there any particular time of the day that it occurred?

Gil: Incessantly. I mean, all day long you would hear this barrage of hairpins; there was no end to it.

Monte: How long a period did this encompass?

Gil: I would say almost a year and a half, and during all this it was a thoroughly predictable phenomenon. I would say I was about 13. Give or take a couple of years.

Monte: Do you know of any other factors in your mother's family history that might have predisposed her to this kind of experience?

Gil: No, except that my mother was thoroughly familiar with it. It was not a mysterious or inexplicable thing.

Monte: Well, in other words, were there any other members in your mother's family who had this talent?

Gil: No. My mother seemed to exhibit a certain amount of mediumistic ability. Of course she sat at the slightest provocation; she was extremely interested in this, and if she ever found anybody who was interested in the subject, she would persuade them to [sit].

Monte: Now this interest occurred in her adult life?

Gil: Oh yes. But prior to my being born; as a matter of fact, it goes way back into her career, and as I say, it started with the Dolly Sisters.

Howard: You had some experience with your mother and the ouija board, didn't you?

Gil: Oh, yes. The ouija board was part of our arsenal, but this particular phenomenon I didn't pay too much attention to.

Monte: Are there any other family antecedents or anybody else that anybody might consider relevant to this, or any other questions about the phenomena Gil has described that anybody can add to? Now, can you tell us about the cessation of this? Was it sudden? Did it suddenly disappear? Did it disappear on your moving to another location?

Gil: Yes. The moving seemed to change the situation. There were many sporadic manifestations after that, but as I grew older, as a matter of fact, it just seemed to come to a certain peak in my life and then tapered off and that was the end of it; we never had another spontaneous phenomena [sic] like that again.

Group Interview with Gilbert (May 15, 1971)⁶

Unidentified: Did it occur at a time when no one was in the house?

Gil: That's hard to know, except when we came back we'd find "Go" written on the walls...

⁶When the speaker identifies himself, he or she will be designated by name. When the voice is not recognizable or not identified, Unidentified will be used in place of the name.

Unidentified: And presumably that took place when you were out.

Gil: This I don't know.⁷

Unidentified: Excuse me, Gil. One question. There's something that—talking about the energy young people have—did this poltergeist thing ever happen when you were there without your mother?

Gil: Now you're asking me specific questions and I honestly don't remember. In all honesty, I can't remember.

Unidentified: I want to ask one question. I remember being shown by you or Len a newspaper article.

Unidentified: I remember that. The Journal or the American.

Unidentified: Yes, the Journal. It would be interesting to look it up. Do you know where?

Gil: It was the Journal-American, and it was on the occasion [of] Hereward Carrington coming up and investigating.

Unidentified: Was it the Journal-American then?

Gil: Whatever it was called. It was a Hearst paper, but I do know that Carrington came to investigate the thing and he was of the opinion that I was doing it. It was his opinion that I was doing it. As a matter of fact, it was my father who brought in Mr. Carrington, I believe. I do know he came up and went through my pockets and I had a couple of hairpins and a rubber band and some marbles in my pockets, you know, everything but a pet frog, so he put all these things together—the hairpins and the rubber bands, etc., and he came up with "psychotic, moody," and while he was there, there was no phenomenon at any time—at any time of any kind, and most of his analysis that I remember was a picture of me being a subversive of some sort. So his final conclusion was that he saw nothing that could be properly called poltergeist. All the indications pointed to a highly emotional child who was very probably the cause.

Unidentified: Did you flatly deny that?

Gil: I didn't even know he had written it, and I couldn't care less. I mean, it was his opinion, and he didn't see anything happen, and he did find, when he went through my pockets, some hairpins and a rubber band which, of course, you could very easily shoot, but he completely ignored the fact that this thing occurred when I wasn't home, and things occurred that I couldn't have done. Well, the point I want to make is there were things he never saw. There were things that occurred while I was not there and mother was there alone, and mother always claimed dad had him do this to invalidate the phenomenon.

Larry: I wish I had known about this when I went to visit him [Carrington] in Hollywood.

Gil: Well, anyway, he made out his report and he placed the burden on me.

Unidentified: You don't have a copy of this, do you?

⁷Referring specifically to the writing on the walls.

Gil: No, you may be able to find one though. But his conclusion was that I was responsible for it.

Unidentified: How long a period would you say this went on?

Gil: I would say, and this is purely a guess, about a period of eight months. It began as an isolated thing and built to a climax.

Malamud's Tapes of Leonard (January 20, 1985)

The material that follows is from a tape of the recollections of Leonard [Jeff] Lauer made on January 20, 1985 in the presence of his step-daughter, Dr. Judith Malamud, who put questions to him from time to time. This excerpt describes Leonard's early encounter with Gilbert and his recall of what Gil told him of the poltergeist.

Leonard: In the summer of 1931 or 1932 I was living in Washington Heights. A family that had recently moved in across the street had one child my age, Gil. I was 15. Gil and I got to be very friendly. I found that before they had moved here they had had a poltergeist experience in their home. One of the things in his house was the distribution of oatmeal uniformly over the carpets. The "spirit" in their house was called "Liz," and years after when we spoke of Liz we spoke of her as though she were a thing: Gil, his mother, Larry and I. Oatmeal and hair-pins were Liz's thing. Olga's hair was long done up in a bun. One of Liz's games was to shower a door with hairpins on the floor.

Judith: And there was nobody else in the room?

Leonard: Nobody else in the room. Gil's father, who was really his stepfather, while he was enormously fond of Gilbert, never could buy the explanation of poltergeist. To him, somehow or other, Gilbert did all of this stuff and it drove him nuts because he was fond of Gil whom he saw as doing this to get even with him, for whatever I don't know. There was a long history of this stuff and some of it I ran into at the tail end when it was never dependable. Before they had moved across the street from us, there was a period of time where they could depend on it every month. Near the end of it Liz started to take to writing on the walls in crayon: "GO, GO." They finally picked up and moved out. Gil and his mother left Eddie [Gil referred to Eddie as his father. He was actually his stepfather] in their flat. [Explains this was the home they lived in before, not too far away.] They moved out and moved across the street from us and it all quieted down. Then peace was made between Gil's mother and Ed, and further incidents of that were very, very few. Some of the hairpin

*The reader will note discrepancies as the same events are recalled at different times in different accounts. Memory being what it is and the accounts ranging from 23 to over 50 years from the time of the events, such discrepancies are inevitable. For the most part they concerned minor details but in a few instances our failure to get further clarification was frustrating.

¹⁰Gil's mother

business and the oatmeal business and one other: the destruction of a very beautiful electric train engine. Stuff like that. I had later seen enough of this to know that the reports were factual. I had it confirmed in front of my own eyes. At any rate, Gil suspected that his mother was slightly psychic and we decided if the Dolly Sisters could do it we could do it.

Judith: Did Gil feel he was psychic; did he think he was doing it?

Leonard: I think Gil felt he was psychic.

Next, Gilbert recalls Leonard's reaction to his disclosure about the poltergeist and the decision to hold sittings (Reunion 1966). - M. U.

Gil: I do remember the actual beginning of this thing started with my speaking of it to Leonard. He had no previous knowledge of such phenomenon [sic], and as a matter of fact, we had an argument about it because I told him some of these things which did occur and he expressed extreme skepticism about it. He had no patience with the whole subject, and he, as a matter of fact, had no use for the subject, you see—he was completely skeptical about it. However, I was rather offended about this because of the experience I had had and with his impatience with the whole idea, and so I suggested that he do some reading on the subject and I recommended Hudson's book, *Law of Psychic Phenomena*, and Leonard of course, being an extremely intelligent person, immediately saw that there was some area of interest here, so from that point on he became much more interested in the subject, and we sat alone for the first couple of times, I think, and got no results. However, it continued and I think that was the nucleus.

EARLY SITTINGS PRIOR TO M. U.

Reunion Accounts of Initial Sitzings 1931-Autumn 1932

Because I was not a party to the initial formation of the sitter group, this section is drawn from accounts by those who were there. The sitters were Gil and Leonard, soon joined by Larry and then Leo. There was general agreement at the reunions that the starting date for these sittings was sometime in 1931. Leonard recalls his initial reaction to having a sitting and to the results that occurred (Reunion, 1966).

Leonard: My attitude was truly skeptical but because of the rapport between us, it didn't occur, and I couldn't conceive of the fact that Gilbert could be fabricating. It didn't occur to me. So it was a kind of skepticism which doesn't mean anything—one that defies somebody to show me, but invites and is anxious to be shown. And on the basis of this we sat that very evening! We darkened the room and the two of us sat at opposite sides of the table. I think it was a bridge table. It was the kind of thing where we couldn't be sure of any sounds and I don't know whether we had any

¹⁰The early sittings

results at all that first sitting or not, but we persisted, and for a while we may have sat several times in the next few weeks—two weeks even... I guess you talked about the table markings¹¹ there were hiatuses.¹² Just how long they were, I don't know, but when we finally got this rather light table to tilt, we had so much, we had to share this, and I think Larry was the first one to join. How often we three sat I can't say. I do know that after the first couple of times, again there was a major step in which we began to try talking to "this thing" by spelling out the alphabet and getting it to tilt at the desired letter. I wouldn't say that any of these communications were very interesting in terms of content, but that they occurred was very exciting. And, of course, the thing that I remember most about that particular trio—the climax of whatever developed with us three, was rather violent table movements in which we skidded around the dark room in order to keep up with this thing... and then some pretty dramatic and powerful levitation.... A couple of times the thing would get beyond where we could reach and then there was this crashing down to the floor. At one time Larry reported—he was shorter in those days; we two fellows were tall—that he could no longer reach the top of the table and had grabbed the legs, and it was afterward that he had pulled himself up so that his feet were not on the ground. Do you remember that? Now this is a recollection. Apparently there's something that I may have added to this, but this was part of my memory—that this darn thing was up there... If you are interested in reproducing any part of this journal article, please contact the American Society for Psychological Research, Inc., New York, New York, USA. All rights reserved.

Larry: I remember it being up beyond my reach...

Leonard: [Y]es, well I had the feeling that you had tried to pull it down but, then again, this wasn't my experience, but what I think I remembered from what Larry reported when we stopped. I think, again chronologically, this is hard... I can give you what I think the order was... I think the next addition to the group was Leo. If I'm not mistaken, I think Leo was the one who made it a foursome... In this area it began to be for us a demonstration thing. We didn't have the kind of intelligent phenomenon that later became identified with Bindelof, but we did have the ability to generate a hell of a lot of force and a very dramatic and convincing demonstration of telekinesis.

Leonard attempted to give a more detailed account of these early sittings (1969 reunion).

Leonard: There were just the two of us and we were sitting there attempting to duplicate some of this [sic] phenomena intentionally, and we used a small nightstand or night table. We sat for 10-15-20 minutes, with no assured results, then we turned on the light and rested. Then we rolled back the rug and put the table on the bare floor to see if it would slide; the motion was so imperceptible that we chalk-marked the floor around the

¹¹Referring to chalk marks Leonard put on the floor outlining the legs of the table to detect any motion.

¹²Referring to intervals between the meetings.

legs in order to see whether or not what we thought was motion was in fact motion. This was where it was at the first couple of times. Yes, we thought it moved because there it was—out of the ring. It wasn't the kind of thing that would inspire one to go back immediately and try again the very next night, but we did try, and we had gotten to the point where the table would tilt, very definitely. Does this strike a resonant chord?

One: My memory isn't as good as yours, so go ahead.

Leonard: Initially, most of the time we sat at my place. First we didn't get knocks, and we tried communication by having the table tilt at a desired level. I can't remember any messages or even words spelled out that meant a goddamn thing, except all that seemed to happen as a result of this kind of concentration was [when] the table tilting became more affirmative and less vague. It would tilt definitely at D, X, and Q. It didn't add up to make any sense, but it did help us develop. On other occasions, we would get raps, as I remember, and it was at this point where we really had something to show. I don't remember what the occasion was, but we wanted very much to show it off to somebody, and you [Larry] were Sucker #1.¹³ We started just about where we were, with table tiltings, and a new thing was added. We could no longer sit comfortable [sic] at the table with our hands on it because the table wouldn't stay in that one section of the room.

Larry: The first time I sat at Gil's was later, within a few weeks or so, and it was at night when we went over to your house, because I remember your folks were out, and we sat at that bridge table in the living room.

Leonard: All I can give you is an impression. One of the qualitative differences between sitting à trois and à deux was that instead of sitting to generate it to run around the Rosie, particularly when we were trying to get the table off the ground, many times we would chase all around the little table in my living room—all around the damn living room as though we were trying to generate a force to lift, but frequently it would not lift. It would fall over and frequently it would fall over on its leg.

Monie: Let me just pin this down a bit. You're talking about a night table, right?

Leonard: We used both a night table from my room and a bridge table. This happened for [us] three. In other words I tried to describe the quality of difference of the phenomenon as it developed or as a consequence of Larry's coming into the group; whichever variable was greater, I don't know. But this is one of the things that happened. And also, we had levitations. One of the earliest that I recall (and it may not be the first) was the one involving the night table (the small one) in which the thing went way-the-hell up, in the dark of course, and Larry exclaiming, "I can't reach the top of it; I'm holding on to the legs." This is like an indelible experience in my mind. Do you remember that?

Larry: I was quite short then. I hadn't reached my height yet. I was only about 15 at the time and I hadn't yet grown to my normal 5'10" which I

¹³The reader should understand this was a playful reference, not a serious one. - M. U.

ultimately reached. It was one of those image recollections. There were other things that happened in the Bindelof group since then that are not nearly that precise and vivid.

Malcolm's Tape of Leonard Regarding More About the Early Days of the Group Sitzings (1985)

Leonard: And they began, I guess, in the fall of '31. I decided we would sit, just the two of us. The structure and the format of our sitting was nothing we dreamed up. It would seem that it was kind of a traditional I had been reading in some papers that were available in the public library, the *Journal of the (London) SPR* [*Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*]. Generally speaking, they darkened the room, everybody was quiet, some person acted as spokesman, and you talked to thin air as though there were somebody there. And in these things I had been reading about, something responded. So we adopted a similar format, and the first half dozen sittings were in my house.

Judith: What was the format?

Leonard: Originally we started with a bridge table, very light. We sat when the family was out and my brother was asleep. We turned out all the lights and pulled down the shades. You got a reasonably darkened room. Remember, this is New York City so there are lights all around and lights filter in and around the shades of the blinds that you draw, etc. so, as soon as your eyes dark-adapt, it isn't that dark at all. You couldn't read in that light but you could very clearly see one another and all the outlines in the room. But we used to get it as dark as we could. Then we'd sit down and we'd ask the table to move. And I guess in the beginning we sat for periods of 20 minutes long which, when nothing happens, is interminable.

Judith: What were you doing with your hands?

Leonard: Oh, we used to hold hands across the table. One of the reasons we got rid of the bridge table—there were several reasons—was that it was a long reach, so you wound up resting your arms on the table inevitably and that made the table much heavier than it was.

Judith: When you say you wanted the table to move do you mean to slide across the floor?

Leonard: Any way at all! We were expecting it to slide, hopefully. As I say, we sat all one evening, 20 minutes, 15 minutes, light on, light off, light on for a glass of water or milk, then back again, with virtually nothing happening and our changing some of our tactics, like sitting side by side at a table so we could just put our fingertips on it and hold one another's hands without adding any weight, rolling back the carpet so the table would be able to move over the polished wooden floor—to no avail.

Judith: How long did you keep this up with no results?

Leonard: Well, the first day with no results. The next night we sat the following day or two days after, I don't know—we began to get something

very different: a lot more "threatened movements" of the table. It didn't really move because we put little chalk marks [around] the legs, because after you sit there for a while and the thing creaks and moans, you don't know if it's moved or not. That's where we started. We gave that up after a bit but every strain, every shift that your arms made, produces a sound, crick, crack, creak, and there was much more of that the second night. That was all the encouragement we needed.¹⁴

We sat a third night and whether it was the 3rd or 4th evening of this, I'm not sure, this darn table actually moved: "You feel it move?" "You feel it move?" [Holding each other's hands, imitating their excitement.] "It did move, didn't it?" "I measure!" "Your side moved more than my side." That kind of thing. We turned on the light and, sure enough, there was [sic] our chalk marks where the table legs were and here was the leg. Over on Gil's side there was the ring and here was the leg.

Judith: How many inches would you say?

Leonard: Oh, maybe 4 or 5 inches. Big stuff! I don't know, but very quickly after that the motion became quite positive. Instead of waiting forever we'd sit there and wait for a little while and all of a sudden you could feel life in the table. [We said] "Move to the right: zhoo! [imitating]. Move back: zhoo!" And oh, wowie! And now it was a question of barely touching the table to make sure neither of us was doing it. And we did. "We're gonna communicate. I'm gonna pull out the letters of the alphabet 'zhoo' at the letter you want." It wasn't English. The thing would get eager. You'd say A, zhoo! B, zhoo! C, zhoo! Or you would say A, B, C, D. It was quiet, like chastised. Then you'd say it again. Then it wouldn't move at all. It was quite clear we were dealing with something that acted as though it understood what we were saying and couldn't act very intelligently about it. We had an idea that tilting the table would be better and it was around the tilting table thing that we switched from the bridge table to a very solid but much smaller nightstand table. Between the twin beds in my bedroom there was a thing built like a brick shut house about 20" by 20". It stood higher than the bridge table, had a shelf underneath, four very big legs and you could not make it creak if you wanted to [laughs]. Very rigid little piece. And we started to sit with this and since it was much narrower, even though it was heavier, it tilted better. By the time we could get the table to tilt we would get some kind of response. By that I mean a word that [was] actually spelled. Didn't mean anything particularly but we didn't need meaning.

Judith: By tilting, you mean it would lift up on 3 legs?

Leonard: On two legs. Two legs would stay down, two would come up and it would tilt. We used two tilts for no, one for yes.

Judith: How much did it weigh?

Leonard: It was a heavy bastard, maybe about 50 pounds, maybe 40. A

¹⁴Leonard's joy and enthusiasm in reliving this section is contagious, filled with wonderment, fun, excitement, etc. Judith Malinud.

finally, levitation of the table. There is some uncertainty as to whether or not there were any convincing manifestations of a paranormal intelligence at work. It was the beginning of Leonard's and Larry's passionate interest in psychic phenomena and, through Leonard, it led to my own enduring interest. In 1931, when these effects were noted, the sitters were all 15 years of age.

Because I believe the emotional context in which these phenomena unfolded may very well be an important contributing factor, I want to stress the playful and fun aspect that characterized these and later sittings. It was the sense of adventure, fun, and excitement that kept these 15-year olds at it. The results, combined with their reading, heightened their interest and deepened their belief that the events they were witnessing were truly in the tradition of psychical research.

Part II. The Period of My Participation in the Group—Early Days

MY INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHIC PHENOMENA (1932-1933)

In September of 1932 the fall term of my sophomore year at City College had started. Len, whom I had known since grade school, was in several of my classes as we were both majoring in science. We were both 16. I have a distinct recollection of Len and me walking home from school one day when he began telling me the story of how he, Gil, and later Larry had been holding seances and that a number of incredible things had happened as they sat about a table in the dark, holding hands. I believe I knew what a seance was, but that was the limit of my knowledge when Len started to educate me about the world of psychic phenomena. He described the results the three of them had obtained, progressing from creaks and dubious movements of the table to definitive movements, knocks and finally, levitation. He then introduced me to words I had never heard before. He described the "poltergeist" that plagued Gil and his family several years earlier. He spoke of "materialization" and "ectoplasm." He had done an impressive amount of reading and rattled off such names as William Crookes, Oliver Lodge, F. W. H. Myers, William James, and Thomson Jay Hudson. My initial incredulity was tempered by my respect for the written word, especially when it was the word of someone who held a place of honor in the pantheon of science.

Len also told me that after a lapse of several months, they were about to resume sitting and wanted to know if I would like to join them. My high regard for Len combined with the impressive list of names he reeled off (including Schreck-Notzing who, Len told me, was a psychiatrist who had written about seances with a famous medium capable of producing materialization and ectoplasm) all made for a ready acceptance of Len's offer.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

Looking back at an event that occurred over 70 years ago I cannot say with any certainty precisely what my reaction was. My deepest feeling is that I responded with interest and was somewhat flattered to be part of whatever Len was involved in. He suggested that I read Hudson's (1893/1970) book *The Law of Psychic Phenomena*, which I promptly did. I think that eliminated any vestiges of doubt I may have had. Sometime in the autumn of 1932 I joined Len, Gil, and Larry and began a series of regular Saturday night sittings that lasted through spring of 1934 and for some, even later. During that time a number of others, mostly other boys our age, joined and sat regularly, forming a core group of seven [Gil, Larry, Len, Howard, George, Tom, and myself]. Others, including girl friends, came sporadically.

SOURCES USED IN COMPILING THIS SECTION

Aside from memory, this account is drawn from the following sources from which extensive quotations are given in the present paper:

1. A thesis I wrote for a course in logic in the spring semester of 1933.
2. An account I wrote in 1946.
3. An account by Howard in 1966.
4. Transcripts of the reunions held in 1966, 1969, and 1971.
5. An account by Len in 1985.

The transcripts and accounts run to several hundred typed pages. I have excerpted brief sections to illustrate our collective effort to check our memories relative to a particular incident. The completed first draft and transcriptions of the sittings were sent to the surviving members of the core group [Gil, Larry, and Howard] for any changes they cared to make. There are, of course, discrepancies in some of our recollections, and these will be noted.

METHOD

Setting, Ambiance, and Procedure

The arrangements were much as described in the introductory segments of this narrative. The early sessions I attended were held in the living room of Len's apartment. Most of the later ones were in the bedroom of Gil's apartment. Occasionally sessions were held elsewhere (notably, Len's and Tom's apartments).

Sessions were held in the evening. The procedure was to darken the room to the extent possible and then to sit around a bridge table in Len's apartment or a bedside table in Gil's with our hands in contact with each other and held lightly on the table. Gil's bedroom could be darkened until it was nearly total darkness. It was not possible to get the same degree of

darkness in Len's living room, and some degree of light adaptation occurred. In the various accounts the sittings at Gil's were described as occurring in near-total darkness. My impression was that there was enough ambient light at times for some adaptation to occur.

We sat for periods that averaged 15-20 minutes at a time. Len usually acted as spokesman, speaking as if to an unknown force and saying something like, "Will you make your presence felt by moving the table?" We would then wait patiently for any manifestation involving the table. If nothing happened, Len would repeat the request. Whether or not we got results we generally did not sit for much longer than 20 minutes. The lights would then be turned on. If we were in Gil's apartment, we would gather in the living room and relieve the tension with horseplay or by listening to music (it was my introduction to classical music) or talking about what had happened during the sitting. I recall very boisterous interludes as if we were working out the tension and excitement generated during the sitting. It was as if we couldn't get the record player to play loud enough. *Scheherazade* and Honneger's *Pacific 231* were our favorites. Larry (a budding actor) and Gil, both with a quick-witted sense of humor, played off each other, keeping the rest of us in hysterics. After the break, we would go back to sitting. This cycle repeated itself three or four times in the course of the evening. Depending on how productive the sittings were we might continue until eleven or twelve at night. On leaving Gil's apartment, several of us would have a late night snack at a nearby cafeteria before returning home.

For the most part, I don't believe anyone else was in either apartment at the time we sat. There were occasions at Gil's when his mother, Olga, was at home or Gil's stepfather Eddie, would be there and entertain us with his piano playing and singing. When we did get results our mood was buoyant and self-congratulatory.

EARLY RESULTS

I don't recall what happened at the very first sitting I attended. According to the 1966 reunion, Leo [Lance], a cousin of Len's, was also there at the time I joined. Whether or not anything happened that first night, I joined in the resolve of the group to sit regularly in the hope of again generating the effects that had occurred earlier when only the original three members met.

Recollections at 1966 Reunion—Levitations

A description of the very early results involving the table is described in the following account taken directly from my thesis. The clarifications noted in brackets were added some time later.

The first phenomena we developed goes [*sic*] by the name of telekinesis, or super-normal movement of objects, not due to any known force. In these

experiments, we [there were four of us] used an ordinary bridge table, keeping contact with the table and with each other by means of our hands. [The bridge table was used at Len's where the conditions were not as dark as at Gil's.] The room is usually light enough to permit us to see what takes place. After one or two moments the table would start to move, and distinct knockings are heard, seemingly coming from beneath the table. One of the sitters utters commands [it is immaterial who does the talking as long as all the others are thinking along with him], and response is almost instantaneous. The table moves to the one whose name is mentioned. We then managed to get the table tilting in whichever direction we asked. After continued experiments of this type, we finally decided to get this unknown force to elevate the table. Our early attempts in this direction all ended in failure. However, one night we were all thrilled by the sight of the table rising from beneath our hands to a height of two or more feet! We repeated this and were successful at a following trial. One time, when we had the table up, we each individually removed our hands from its surface. To the astonishment of all, a simple, ordinary bridge table remained suspended in mid-air for about two seconds before collapsing to the ground. Encouraged by our success, we kept on trying. The height of our accomplishment with telekinesis was an experiment in which we made the table come up to our hands which we held about two feet above. [Success without contact of the hands we had always found rather difficult.] (Ullman, 1933)

The following summary of these early results involving the table was prepared by me in 1946 in an abortive attempt to prepare a complete account of our experiences:

In common with other novice investigators, we found that it was very easy to mistake creaks and slight movements of the table, resulting of course, from unequal pressure distribution, for knocks and telekinetic effects. It was at the third sitting [I am not certain of this count in retrospect. — M.A.] when movements of the table occurred which seemed to be much more pronounced than those slight movements which had occurred previously and which we attributed to the sheer physical effort of sitting about the table with our hands resting on it. The first phenomenon noted was a slight tilting of the table. In the course of succeeding sessions the tilting became more frequent and more pronounced, and there was a concomitant development of movement of the table in the horizontal plane along the floor. At first, both the tilting and the horizontal movement of the table were unpredictable in their occurrence and intensity. Certain sittings were characterized by a complete absence of results, or very meager results in comparison to what had gone on before. [Similar streaks of failure occurred sporadically throughout the entire year of work, although blank sittings became less frequent as we went along.]

In the course of either the second or third month [again, the exact time relationships are not clear] it became apparent that the "force" [a bland designation for whatever it was that was responsible for the telekinetic effects] was capable of responding to simple commands such as a request to tilt or move the table in a specified direction. At this stage of development, the hands of the sitters were at all times resting on the table. The first attempts to obtain knocks, made during this period, exhibited the same

general development. After initial failure there were at first feeble noises, easily interpreted as movements on the part of one of the sitters (e.g., creaks, etc.), later giving way to occasional definite but random knocks, and finally unmistakable sharp raps occurring on command. These raps seemed to come from the center of the table.

By the end of the fourth month [this may be inaccurate to the extent of several weeks], the situation was somewhat as follows: The movements of the table, apparently apart from any physical effects of the sitters had developed to a remarkable degree. Levitation, unsuccessfully sought at first, did occur after repeated attempts. The table [which weighed 40-50 pounds], with our hands resting lightly on its surface, would rise a few inches, all four legs being completely off the floor. Later on it rose a foot from the floor, and finally to a point so high above our heads that we could no longer make contact with it. During these sessions the table would often move about the room so fast that it was difficult for the sitters to keep up with it.

The knockings continued to vary considerably in intensity and seemed to be the most difficult and erratic of the physical phenomena to evoke. At times the raps would come through with frightening intensity and at other times they would be barely audible. It soon became possible to obtain a specified number of knocks on command. The spokesman, Len, would address the "force" as if it were an intelligent entity. At a time when the knocks were occurring with considerable regularity, an attempt was made to elicit yes and no answers by having two knocks signify "no" and one knock "yes." Concomitant with this was an attempt to elicit messages by having the spokesman call out the letters of the alphabet and requesting a knock after the letter desired. Here again the account will suffer by generalization and limitation of memory since there remains no written record of what happened during these particular sittings.

What was uppermost in our minds was to determine, if we could, whether or not we were dealing with discarnate entities; and, in any event, to learn more about the nature of the force that was operative. We did establish (at least to our own satisfaction) that we were now in contact with an intelligent force, although it is not clear whether up to this point we had received any definite information, such as the name of any specific deceased person, etc. This problem, in any case, was soon lost sight of in our absorption with new lines of endeavor. Drifting along as we had been, our general policy up to that point had been to attempt to develop each type of phenomenon to its highest pitch, and then turn to another phase of investigation. In the phase that followed, which dealt with paranormal photography, materializations, and direct writing, our approach was somewhat different in that we struggled with all three phenomena simultaneously. The circle had increased in size by this time and included Howard, George, and Tom.

Howard, George, and Tom became regular members of the group during this early period [late 1932, early 1933]. Howard noted the following in his 1966 account of what was occurring at the time he joined the group:

I immediately became a regular, indeed a never-failing attendant. There were violent table thumpings and table risings, sometimes high into the air so that we had to literally stand up in order to keep our hands on the edge of the table.

In the following section, taken from a tape of the 1966 reunion,¹⁶ Gil expresses the sense of the group that until levitation and gross movement of the table, there was no way of differentiating spurious from genuine effects. Larry recalls an early levitation that occurred during the early period when just he, Gil, and Len were sitting.

Gil: Now when you came into the circle, we were at that point getting levitation, weren't we?

Howard: Yes.

Monte: Now this confirms my recollection, you see, because I recall being in at a point where we were just sitting around waiting for a little knock to occur or a tilt to occur.

Gil: Well, yes and frankly I had no feeling of anything for these elementary manifestations because table rappings are so deceptive. In other words, you can have a table which creaks and raps beautifully and it's of course no indication of a psychic manifestation. Also tilting, I think, is questionable in all good faith. I believe if you have eight or ten people around a table, all concentrating, and one subconsciously without meaning to gives a slight pressure in one direction, I think all the others, wanting the thing to happen, automatically will contribute to this motion, and therefore you can have a spurious manifestation which everyone will think is valid. So I think these phenomena, being very basic, are not necessarily impressive. As Howard says, he came in when we were getting levitations and I think our method of sitting was that our feet and hands were always in contact. One basic rule that we did have was that all—everyone's feet—had to be touching and also all hands had to be held. In other words, no member was free.

Howard: Just one thing. I'm almost sure that at my first sitting [my first attendance] the table was raised so high in the air that we were practically standing up. Now I'm almost sure that was my first sitting—standing, as a matter of fact.

Larry: The mention of levitation brings to mind the fact that quite early we got levitation, because I think that's what kept us going. I don't think we would have kept going with just creaks, and I remember the table not only rising completely off the ground, but actually at one point, we began getting levitation without touching the table. We removed our hands from the table and I remember being very impressed with the levitation and also. . .

George: Was there enough light to see this?

Larry: Yes. That was the point I was going to make. The room was not in total darkness during this period.

Gil: Where was this? In my place?

Larry: Yes, in your bedroom on Fort Washington Avenue. I can remember that very vividly. Even trying to push the table down. I remember

¹⁶Attended by Gil, Leonard, Larry, Howard, George, and myself.

especially Gil saying, "You can't get the table down." We were all pressing on it, and we worked with different tables because in the beginning we used that little night table, but then later we used a bridge table.

Recollections at 1966 Reunion—Psychic Photography

Sometime in the spring of 1933 our interest shifted to psychic photography. By that time we had gotten a bridge table to dance around the room so rapidly that it was hard to keep up with it. We got a bridge table to levitate. We felt we were in contact with an intelligence of some kind, even though no clear-cut message came through by knocks in response to spelling out the letters of the alphabet. We were ready to move on.

Gil had an interest in photography and earlier had set up a makeshift darkroom. No one else had any experience in developing film. In what follows, I will supplement my own recall by references in the various accounts about the purchase of the photographic pieces and the procedure we followed. The following recollections are taken from the transcript of the 1966 reunion:

Larry: Now my recollection is going with Gil and Leonard to a photography store right on Broadway several doors away from Loewe's Rio Theatre, buying the plates.

Monte: That box (see Figure 4) is the box we purchased the plates in. And what did the plates come in? How were they prepared? How were they wrapped?

Gil: Well, they were sealed as any commercial plates are: light-proof paper and sealed carton, which you have there. Of course, the seals are broken . . . Then the package itself that contained the plates was not opened until the entire group had met, and then I don't remember which of the group was present—who was there—when the metal plate holders were loaded . . . Weren't you present, Monte, when they were loaded?

Gil: I think they were loaded into the plate holders in the presence of two or three people, and then the proceedings we were going to use was then decided upon after the plates were loaded.

From Len's 1985 Account

Len: Three of us bought the film pack together. Eastman Kodak plates came in a sturdy cardboard box with a sealed wax coating all around, waxed paper that was sealed very thoroughly. There was no way it could have been opened without somebody knowing. I was in the darkroom, the bathroom in Gil's house, for the loading of all the plates, when the plates were taken from the box and put in the plate holder under a red lamp.

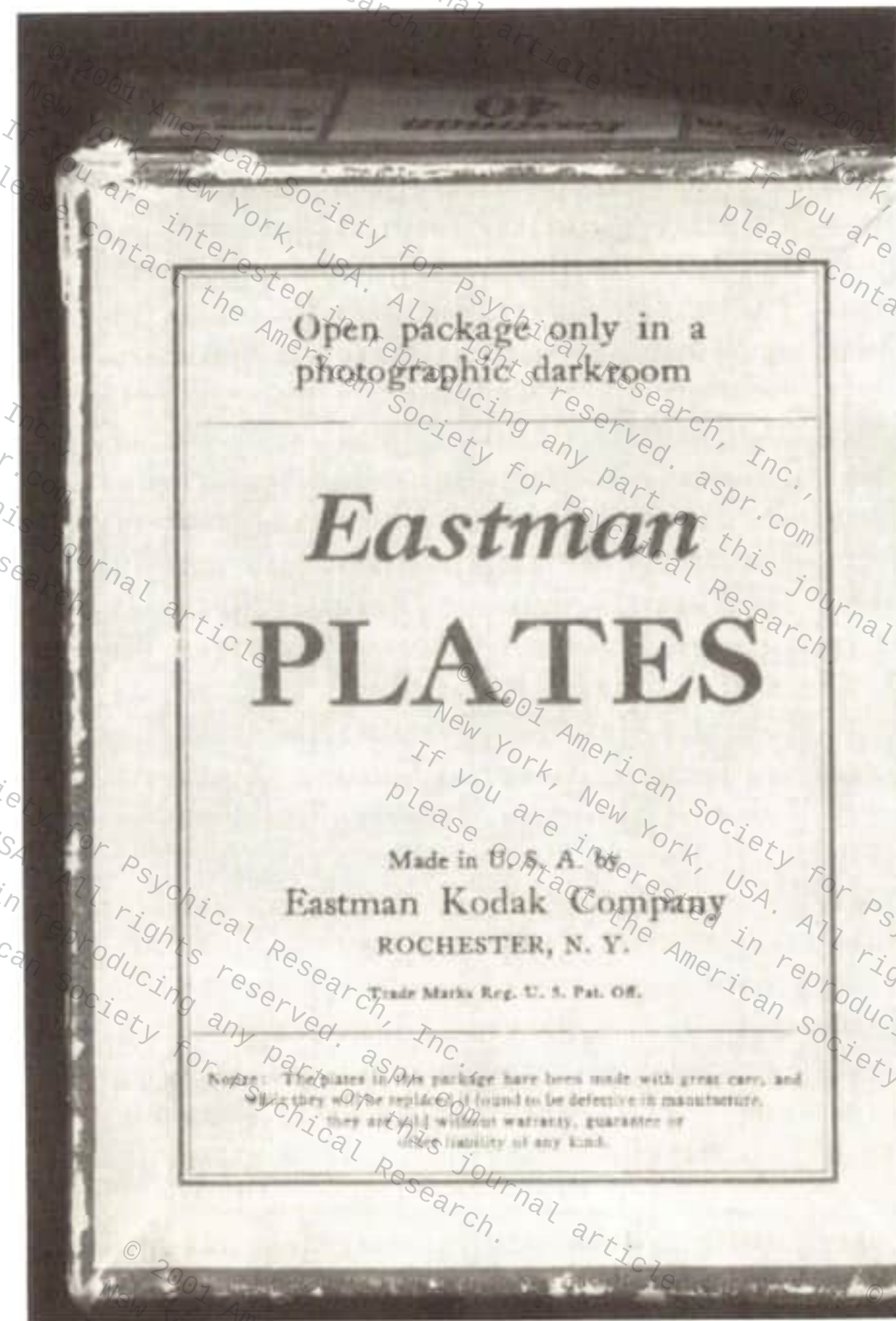


FIG. 4. The original box that contained the Eastman Kodak Plates used in our thought and psychic photography experiments.

Monte was there when two were loaded. We couldn't fit everybody into the john so different people were in at different loadings. Glass sheets [were used] with emulsion on them.

Photographic Results

We gradually became so accustomed to the table motion that it no longer interested us. Our efforts were then turned to the field of photography. I would like to note a curious experience we had in this connection. In our first attempt we took a photographic plate and placed it in a tin case [in this position it could not be affected by any physical force]. The plate was placed on the table with one of the sitters' hands resting on it. The room was absolutely dark during the whole process, and the usual contact was kept. After several moments we put the plate aside thinking that it would not be worth developing as it was impossible for the plate to be affected. We then went back to the table and asked the "force" to give us a message, if it had any, by knocking after the appropriate letter in the alphabet as it was called off by one of the sitters. In this manner the word "P - L - A - T - E" was spelled out. We developed the plate immediately and sure enough, there was a distinct imprint of the hand. We repeated this and obtained several other imprints not only of hands but of any object we placed on the metal case holding plate. (Ullman, 1933)

After the first sitting, I accidentally performed an experiment which convinced me that there was no trickery at all in the matter. While one of the sitters had his hands on the case containing the plate, I placed my thumb over his hand and an imprint of my thumb came out on the plate negative. If the plates had been fixed beforehand (they certainly could not have been handled after the sitting because I myself developed them), this would not have happened. (See Figure 5).

From the 1966 Reunion

Monte: It was my impression that the very first plate was the picture of somebody's hand that had been placed on it, and I also remember putting my thumb over it, so there was a hand and a thumb on the first picture. Does anybody want to add to that?

Gil: Did you do that for any particular reason? Was there any motivation for that?

Monte: I don't recall whether I was just testing or whether this was just a spontaneous gesture.

Gil: Because you remember having slipped your thumb over it, and I wondered if you had a reason for remembering it.

Monte: Well, I don't recall whether it was with the idea of testing out what was being done, or... I think it was more that I wanted to get in on the act.

Several additional pictures of hands also came out on the plates. On



Fig. 5. Monte's thumb over a sitter's hand was a serendipitous discovery when he opened the sealed plate to develop it.

one occasion a cluster of keys was placed on the metal container. (See Figure 6).

Undaunted, we went on to experiments in thought photography. We followed the same procedure but decided to project a thought onto the unexposed plate. These were noted in my thesis (Ullman, 1933):

Thought photographs were the next step ahead. Below [p. 50] is a list of the objects thought about and the objects received on the plate:

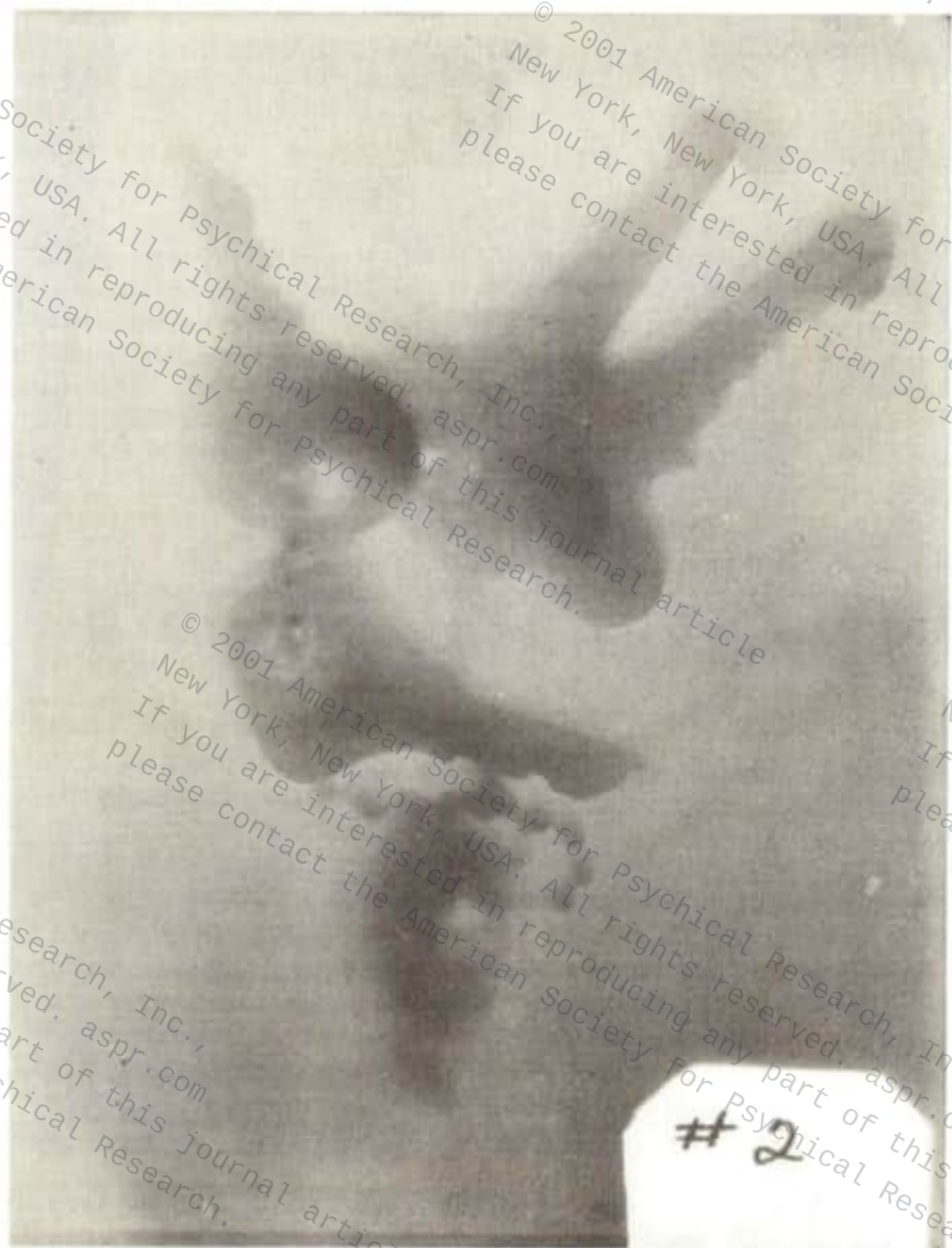


Fig. 6. Photography result of a cluster of keys placed on the metal container.

Objects Thought About
 Page from a book
 Bottle (Large, corkless, with label)
 Message
 Picture of a girl's face

Objects Received
 Column from a newspaper
 Corked, small iodine bottle label-less
 The letter "C"
 Indian idol

The Bindelof Sitter Group

A brief explanation of the above experiments is necessary. In the first one we received a picture of an ordinary newspaper column, and we managed to make out some of the words. In the second one we got on the plate an entirely different bottle from the one we thought about. It was an iodine bottle, later found to be in the medicine chest in the bathroom. In the fourth one we thought about a certain girl. However it seems during this sitting one of the fellows could think of nothing else but Indians. The only possible object suggested by the image on the plate is an Indian idol. It seems as though the thought of this one person determined the results on the plates. In his absence, we could not get any action on the plates at all. We later found, in one of the rooms, a small souvenir the exact shape of the image on the plate. None of the sitters had been thinking of this idol; only one of them had ever seen it before, and that was several years previous. Later accounts provided further detail.

From the 1966 Reunion

Len: It was an attempt to produce a thought photograph. This was not done in the dark. It was an ordinary milk bottle and this was a common object in those days. It was placed on the table. Larry was the center of activity here in the sense that he concentrated on the bottle, although I daresay the rest of us did too, and a plate in a plate cover—in a plate holder with the cover in place, was held in front of Larry's brow—just in front of his head while he concentrated on this milk bottle. Just how long we went through this or just how long he concentrated, I don't know and I don't know if we had any method of deciding how long was long enough.

After developing it, one of us noticed in carefully examining the plate a couple of things. One, that there seemed to be one side of a skull and crossbones on it, which was very exciting. Then the excitement was somewhat reduced when we found the end of the word "pharmacy" on this label and a check through your [Gil's] medicine cabinet produced an iodine bottle, one of which I had at home too, because we lived in the same neighborhood—came from the Rio Pharmacy.

Monte: You mean duplicate bottles?

Len: Yes . . . and we both had bottles like this with the same poison mark on it. It was not the milk bottle staring at them [us]. It was a picture of an iodine bottle (see Figure 7).

Len's Comments in 1985

Len: Then they [we] got involved in thought photography, the possibility of projecting a thought onto film. The results are interesting but confusing. Bottle: In those days milk came in bottles. We took an ordinary empty milk bottle from Gil's kitchen and put it on the nightstand, and held the

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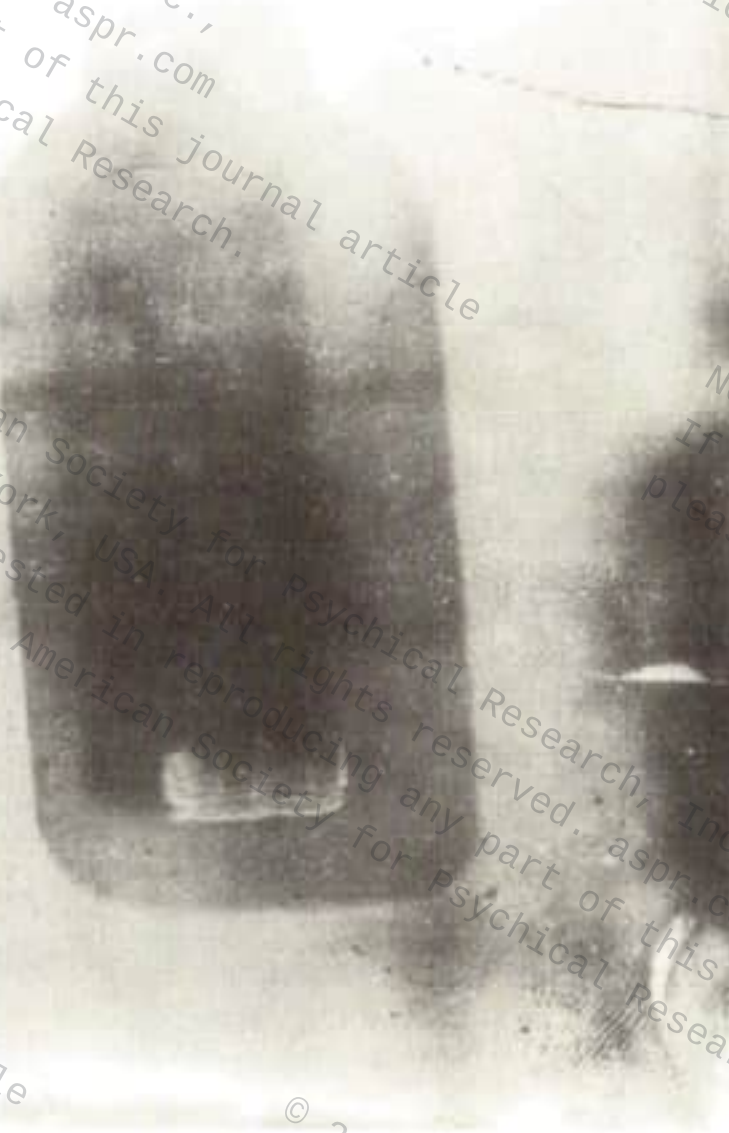


Fig. 7. Thought photography result of an iodine bottle instead of the milk bottle projected on photographic plate, unexposed and closed, against Larry's brow. He was going to project—we were going to help him—the image of the milk bottle. What came out was an iodine bottle. In the originals you could even see the skull and crossbones on the corner of the label. Its shape was unique. On the original you could barely read the name of the pharmacy.

There was one in Gil's medicine cabinet and one in our [my] medicine cabinet, exactly the same. It's also not a good shadow-graph in that it's distorted, geometrically, as though it was heated and pulled a little out of shape. You could get a picture like that if you had a plate that wasn't held flat. You could get that kind of distortion by curving the surface of the thing it was against, except that in this case it was a flat plate. We all wanted that bottle to come out.

Monte: The first one looked like a column of print, and [it was] very difficult to make out. What was the thinking there?

George: It was an attempt to produce a page of a book.

Len: That I remember. It was done under similar conditions to three or four,¹⁷ and I can't be sure whether you were looking at an open book at the time or not. Or just trying to visualize a page of a book. We seemed to have been satisfied at the time, after it was printed, that this was a section of a piece of newspaper because of the columnar structure of the printing and because we were able to read some of it. We were able to read some of it then.

Monte: Not on the photo.

Len: Maybe it was on the original plate.

Monte: Did everybody else seem satisfied that we identified this as a newspaper thing?

Gil: Yes, because that's the way I remember it.

Len: But again, it was done under thought conditions with the object that we actually got not being in the immediate vicinity at all. Again, with an unexposed plate, no camera...

Monte: Was it dark?

Gil: I don't know whether it was dark or not, but I do know that the... that we didn't expose the plate.

Monte: Now, the next object is a picture of an Indian idol.

Len: [interrupting] The disturbing thing about this is that in each case the actual object apparently existed.

Monte: Yes, and this is marked on the back: "Without camera." Does anybody want to tell us how this came about?

Len: This was taken, I think, directly after the "bottle photograph." It was another attempt at thought projection and getting such an impression on a photographic plate. This time Larry held the plate to his head and concentrated on somebody who none of us knew. This was a young woman—Olympia—who was an acquaintance of Larry's of considerable importance at the moment, and he was concentrating on what Olympia looked like; none of us had any idea of what she looked like, and we were hoping that we would get a projection of her image. The development of the plate proved to be a little amulet or Aztec image. The original was

¹⁷The numbers refer to the order in which the pictures were considered by Len at the time.

found to exist in Ellie's¹⁸ possession. She had gotten it once while in Arizona or something.

Monte: Had you ever seen that amulet?

Gil: Not that I was conscious of.

Len: As an interesting side point, I don't think incidentally, that any of us had ever seen that amulet except Gil—[of those present in the room].

Monte: You had seen it before?

Gil: I don't know. I suppose I had since Ellie had it. I don't think I had any reason to associate it.

Larry: I don't think I had any conscious recollection of it.

Len: No, I don't think you had any reason to associate it with his girl friend.

Len: We're just assuming that. We didn't find the amulet immediately. No, we didn't. It was behind the bookcase. I think the existence of the amulet was revealed after Ellie saw the pictures and she recognized it, and then when it was produced, then you remembered having seen it.

Monte: Was Ellie there at the time, do you know?

Len: No. I can't think of even a remote chain of linkage. I mean paranormally, that would produce the amulet.

Larry: No. We tried very hard at the time, and the people were suggesting that perhaps somebody was thinking "Indian." Or, did anyone think Indian when the name Olympia was suggested because it did look like an Indian or an Egyptian figure to us initially. We didn't know what it was or what to make of it.

Additional Commentary by Len in 1985

Len: This was an attempt to project a picture of something only Larry knew. He was seeing a girl named Olympia and none of us had met her. Larry was going to project her picture. What they got was the amulet. A silver Aztec amulet Gil's "half-sister" [aunt] had brought it home from the far West. Silver, beaten flat, etc. truncated hands and feet and slot for ribbon. No one knew where it was. Gil recognized it. The following week we asked [Ellie] but she couldn't find it. In spring cleaning it was found behind a bookcase in her room [in Gil's apartment]. It could have been anywhere. The force we're dealing with could have moved it anywhere.

EVALUATIVE COMMENTS—PSYCHIC PHOTOGRAPHY

There was something strange about the images that resulted. We spoke of them as shadow-graphs. They resembled X-rays more than true photographs. In my thesis I note:

¹⁸Ellie, although Gil's aunt, was a contemporary in age and was referred to by Gil as his half-sister.

There was one peculiar thing about all these plates; the negatives were actually positives. That is, the objects on the negatives were light when normally [i.e., in a normal photo] they should have been dark. It appears as though the plates were affected around the object. On printing the plates we naturally found the positives to be dark, when normally they should have been light. This fact in itself is a strong argument against fraudulent manipulations, as it would be a difficult task for even a skillful photographer to produce results such as ours. (Ullman, 1933)

From the 1966 Reunion

Gil: There was no preconceived idea of what we were going to do, so whatever occurred was spontaneous after the plates were loaded so—I mean, one of us would say, "Let's put keys on the plates," and that would come up on that particular plate. Now, from a technical point of view, the only way this could have occurred normally would have been for the plate itself to be uncovered and the object placed over the plate and then for the light to strike the plate, you see, and then you would have that shadow-graph that you have there. That would be the only normal procedure to get that, but these plates were definitely sealed in the holders and if the holders were faulty you would have had a leakage around the edge: you would have a flare, so apparently the plate was thoroughly protected from any normal radiation and whatever radiation did hit the plates was of an abnormal [i.e., unknown] nature. But then again, talking about trickery, from an objective point of view, it would have been impossible in this case because there was no predetermined method of procedure to arrive at these particular results. That's about all I can contribute. I would say they were developed in the presence of the same people who saw the loading.

Len: Well, the point I think is of importance possibly from an objective scientific point of view is that the things we did with these plates were not prearranged. In other words, we did not say we are going to do this, and this, and this, prior to loading the plates. What we did was spontaneous and pretty arbitrary as far as anybody getting an idea what to do, so there could have been no prearrangements with the plates as such. At least this is my opinion of it, and this is one of the things that convinced me of the genuineness, again, being very objective about the phenomenon at this point, from a purely scientific point of view. The plates could not have been preprepared—let's put it that way, and in developing them—I believe Monte made some mention of putting his thumb over somebody else's and again, this was an entirely spontaneous gesture, and that recorded on the plate. Now they were developed. As you say, shadow-graphed, and I suppose they were actually because there was a radiation or whatever it was. Now the only way this could have occurred normally would have been to have a leaky plate holder and actual light in the room which would then have given you a normal shadow-graph. In other words, you could have duplicated these normally by not having it in the same plate holder. Right?

Even a phony plate holder would not do it. So, in the absence of a plate holder, you would have duplicated this, but otherwise I would say they were genuine. And then we developed them in your presence, I believe. Monte, were you there?

Monte: I was there. I remember we all crowded in that bathroom, and the thing came up as we said.

Len: I can only add that that's so, and that if these had somehow been tampered with plates, I would have had to have been in on the tampering, and I wasn't.

Monte: Any indication that they could have been produced by tampering?

Gil: You could duplicate these plates.

Monte: What would you have had to do?

Gil: Well, we would have had to prepare them. In other words, we would have decided: now, we're going to use a hand, and then that plate would have to have been exposed and the light would have formed a shadow-graph as you have it here, then that plate would have to be put back in the plate-holder, I mean, in the plate box, in the right order and each step would have required very elaborate preparation.

Len: The point that I'm thinking about regarding the validity of this particular thing is that our plans were entirely spontaneous. In other words, no one had predetermined what we were going to do with these particular plates and you say we fairly arbitrarily just put keys on them or hands or other things which were not prearranged. The question is how much control we really had in terms of eliminating other variables. Now for me, then and now, as far as photography is concerned, I'm naive. You may be delighted with that camera¹⁹ he brought in but to me it's just a camera. I have an idea what he can put into a camera, but I have no real feeling for it. To me, I saw the photographic studies, what we did from the point of view of my part in it, as completely controlled. I was there when the plates were purchased; I was there when the stupid wax seal outside came off when we opened them. I was there when the plates were loaded. I was also there when they were developed. I was like his other hand all during this whole thing, so that this seemed to me to be about as controlled and as fool-proof a thing as could be, for me, at least.

State of the Plates

The plates and original photographs came into my possession in 1946, when I recorded the following:

In 1946, when the members of the group were again in contact with each other, it was discovered that Len had in his possession a great many of the original plates (negatives) and several of the original prints. They were kept

¹⁹Here Len refers to the experiments described earlier on pp. 46-50.

in the box in which they had originally been purchased and this bore an Eastman Kodak label stating that the plates were 9 by 13 cm., using emulsion number A062. There were 16 plates.

All of the plates have undergone considerable deterioration. Five are sufficiently well preserved so that the object on the plate is identifiable. This includes three plates of hands, one of the keys, one of the iodine bottle. On the rest of the plates the emulsion is completely gone.

In 1971 I sought advice from Eastman Kodak with regard to preventing further deterioration. I received a three-page single-spaced letter. It provides an extraordinarily detailed analysis and a highly technical set of procedures. The last paragraph is worth noting as that was the only course I could follow. Kodak's instructions concluded:

It is recognized that you may elect to provide a lesser degree of protection than recommended because of the limited value of the plate in terms of its end use, cost of providing storage facilities, etc. Simply storing the plates at the recommended temperature and humidity conditions and in a container made of inert materials will add immeasurably to their storage for long periods.

As a matter of historical interest, I note in my thesis:

These plates and prints were shown to several members of the American Society for Psychical Research²⁰ and it was learned that various other experiments had produced like results, but that ours were outstandingly successful; so successful, in fact, that we received invitations to hold séances at the homes of the different officers of the Society. (Ullman, 1933)

This brings us up to September 2, 1933 when an entirely new series of phenomena came on the scene, which will be considered next.

Part III: The Period of My Participation in the Group—Bindelof Days

OUR ENCOUNTER WITH DR. BINDELOF (1933-1934)

In September of 1933 the most exciting phase of our pursuit of psychic phenomena began. Our weekly sessions from then until the end of the year resulted in happenings that far exceeded not only our expectations but went beyond anything we had read about. By the end of the summer we were veteran sitters, confident about our ability to evoke such unexplainable effects as rapid movements of the table about the room to the point where it was hard for us to keep up with it, levitation, and success with psychography. We were ready for something different. We wanted desperately to pin down the nature of this seemingly intelligent force we had encountered. I think we all wanted to assume it was the work of some

²⁰Hyslop House: 23rd St. and Lexington Ave., New York City.

discarnate entity and that we were on the path toward satisfying our curiosity about survival.

We certainly were more organized, both with regard to the regularity of our sittings and the commitment of the core group to full attendance. When lapses in attendance did occur they were generally for good reasons. Gil's bedroom remained our meeting place for the most part. It was small, set apart from the other rooms, and the one that could be darkened almost completely. Whatever dim light might escape from the edges of the window shade that covered the only window was not enough to disrupt the sense of total darkness. [Some degree of dark adaptation of course did occur—sometimes to the point where sitter outlines could be discerned.] Our procedure was to continue as we had been, namely, to sit around the small table with our hands in contact with each other and held lightly on the table. We were far enough away from the living room so that no noise reached us. We sat for varying lengths of time, generally no longer than 15 or 20 minutes with breaks of the same duration. During these breaks we congregated in the living room, discussing what had happened during the sitting, engaging in hijinx, and listening to records. It was actually my introduction to classical music; Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Scheherazade* and Honnegar's *Pacific 231* were our favorites. On occasion, Gil's mother and his stepfather Eddie would be with us during the breaks. Eddie was a talented pianist who enjoyed playing for us. These breaks were a much needed relief from the tension and excitement generated by the sittings. The state we were in at the time can best be described as a strange mix of both awe and a deep conviction that the phenomena unfolding before us were genuine. I think I can speak for all concerned when I say that these experiences set us apart from the everyday world of ordinary reality, making us feel very special. We were witnesses to "other-worldly" events brought about through our collective effort. Our excitement about what was happening overflowed to friends, including girl friends, resulting in not infrequent guest participants.

By the time these sittings started, the "force" had begun to announce itself soon after the lights were turned off by a rapid series of knocks on the table that gradually increased in intensity, ending with one shockingly loud final knock. Sometimes the staccato raps occurred spontaneously; sometimes it was in answer to our inquiry as to whether the "force" was present. In an effort to move beyond the results we had already obtained we hit on the idea of asking for written messages. Earlier we had attempted to communicate on occasion by spelling out the letters of the alphabet and hearing a knock after the designated letter. This method was cumbersome, time consuming, and the yield, although it occasionally made sense, was never very impressive.

Our collective recall is not very clear as to how we got started once we decided to try for written messages. We ended up placing sheets of yellow foolscap and a pencil on the lower shelf of the night table. Len, whose talent as a natural leader was recognized by all, was designated as the

spokesperson. The messages initially were in response to questions addressed to the "force." Later on, when the "force" identified itself as a distinct entity, it sometimes had an agenda of its own.

Len and I, who had been friends prior to the sittings, resumed and deepened our friendship in 1946 when the core group came together for a not very successful attempt at having a sitting. In our many meetings our talk often went back to our earlier days. His recall of the sittings was far sharper than mine. Unfortunately, I kept no written notes of these sessions. His death in 1988 was a big blow to my hopes for his active collaboration with my desire to reconstruct the experience. There is much of Len's influence behind the present account. His stepdaughter, Judith Malamud; his daughter, Helen Lauer and his wife, Rachel Lauer have been most helpful.

I have sought the input of Gil, Larry, and Howard, the only other surviving members of the core group, in the preparation of this account. [Having assumed the responsibility for writing the initial draft, I am very much aware that it tended to reflect my own perspective.] I am very aware of all that is missing. There are inevitable gaps and uncertainties in recall across a span of over 70 years. The transcripts of the reunions begun almost 40 years ago, make up for this in part, though questions still occur that remain unanswerable.

SOURCES USED IN COMPILING THIS SECTION

My own limited recall of the events to follow will be supplemented by the following sources:

1. The messages themselves. These were entrusted to me several years after the sittings ended. The paper, being ordinary foolscap, eventually began to show signs of wear. Sometime in the 1960s I had the "significant" messages, those written to some length, laminated. There were a number of brief messages that have remained as they were.
2. Additional "psychic" photographs taken in December 1933.
3. Documents prepared at the time of the sittings, including agendas, minutes, and letters of those who participated in the "healing" experiments.
4. An account written in 1934 by Larry.
5. An account written in 1946 by myself.
6. An account written by Howard in 1966, including a chart noting dates of the sessions, attendance, and the various effects noted at each.
7. A taped interview with Helen Pinco [Mrs. Lauer, Len's mother] in 1971.
8. A taped interview with Tom in 1972.
9. A taped account by Gil, Len, and myself on a visit to the Maimonides Medical Center in 1973.
10. A taped account by Jeff in 1976.
11. A taped interview with Jeff in 1985.

12. A taped interview with Ellie in 1989.
13. Taped interviews with Gil in the spring of 1993 and in December 1993.
14. Taped reminiscences of reunions of the core group held in 1966, 1969, and 1971.
15. Informal meetings with Len.

ACTIVE PHASE (SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1933)

The first coherent written message occurred on September 2, 1933. There are a few references in the various accounts as to what happened prior to that date when we tried to obtain writing. At the early trials we could hear the pencil being picked up and put down repetitively with no actual writing. Later, scribbling appeared and then a few printed words [no longer recalled]. From September 2nd on, lengthy printed messages interspersed with occasional short ones were obtained. The general procedure was for Len initially and then later on for Larry to act as spokesman and to ask the "force" to manifest itself. Within a minute or less the very sharp staccato rap was heard. While there was no record most of the time of the questions asked, their nature can be surmised from the content of the message. The writing was very rapid, sometimes incredibly out of proportion to the length of the message. [We were to learn later why this was so.] The pencil was then slammed down, indicating the writing had come to an end. At the same time we could hear the paper being crumpled. The lights were turned on immediately and the message read.

In what follows, the dates of the sequence of sittings are noted along with the messages and any other available data. Sometime in the autumn, concomitant with the written messages, we went back to further experiments in photography as well as efforts at materialization. We became a bit more organized, began to keep minutes (sporadically), and drew up agendas. This, in turn, led to the decision to refer to ourselves as The Bindelof Society, named after the presumptively discarnate entity that befriended us. We had calling cards printed (see Figure 1), elected officers, and collected dues. I was secretary up to the time I left the group, and I believe Len was treasurer.

The messages were written in a legible but somewhat sprawling printed style. Figure 8 is one of the more clearly written messages (sitting of Oct. 9, 1933). All of the messages of any length will be reproduced. There were from time to time shorter messages of a word or two. These will be noted as well as any other material extant from the sittings, such as records of temperature and humidity, agendas, minutes.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

I MUST THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR THE
 WHAT YOU AIDED ME LAST WEEK LET
 YOU THAT SHOULD THIS
 WE ARE AGAIN AND FRUSTRATE MY
 REMAIN AGAIN TO BECOME CONTACT WITH
 YOU DO NOT DISOBEY THE SITTING
 UNTIL YOU HAVE REACHED ME TO REACH
 YOU IF YOU ARE CONTRARY TO THIS ADVICE
 YOU MAY EXPECT A DEFEATED
 BETWEEN US. I HOPE YOU WILL FORGIVE ME
 FOR NOT TREATING HIS EYES LAST WEEK BUT
 I WAS SO EXHAUSTED AFTER LAST SITTING
 THAT I DID NOT HAVE THE STRENGTH
 (YOU BOYS WERE ALSO MENTALLY EXHAUSTED)
 I SHALL TRY TO MAKE UP FOR IT THIS WEEK
 TOM I SHALL SUGGEST A DEVICE
 WHICH YOU CAN CONSTRUCT AT A
 NOMINAL COST. SO THAT I MAY BE
 ABLE TO SPEAK WITH YOU
 - DIAMETER OF RUBBER TUBE LARGE
 RUBBER TUBE
 4 INCH
 3 INCH
 DIAMETER
 RUBBER BAND
 TO COVER HOLE IN TUBE
 ABOUT 8 INCH
 DIAMETER

Fig. 8. A characteristic message from Dr. Bindelof.

September 2, 1933

Imagine the scene. Probably eight of us by that time, in the small room that was Gil's bedroom, the room as dark as we could make it, our hands in contact and resting lightly on a table less than two feet square, the pencil and paper in place on the lower shelf. Len addresses the "force" and the staccato promptly occurs in response. At the first sitting of the evening, the questions pertained to the nature of the "force" and how the earlier

photographs had been obtained. We had apparently also included a question about materialization. Both sides of the paper were written on.

Message #1, September 2, 1933

The force is generated by the combined efforts of the sitters operating in unison. The production of this force by the sitters sets into action the otherwise dormant energy present in the surrounding atmosphere. The force has the ability to penetrate only one solid object of a series. As in the plate, it penetrated only the part of the plate uncovered. However, if the object such as the keys had been welded into one solid piece (combined with the plate cover) the force would have penetrated the entire plate, rendering it entirely exposed. After penetrating one object and encountering another surface of air, it is incapable of penetrating the following object. The force can be projected from one of the sites in the shadow form of an object (the clarity depending on the ability of the sitter). It is not a constant penetration during the plate but an accumulation of force with instant penetration at a maximum point. Materialization and contact you are incapable of understanding.

Comment: The next time we sat that evening a second message was obtained. Note the directions to us to turn the page.

Message #2, September 2, 1933

As I said before, materialization you are incapable of understanding. (It involves the manipulation of dimensions you cannot conceive.) Please believe me when I say this.

I shall by demonstration make it perhaps a bit comprehensive.

Please turn.

Outline

1. Sitters concentrate mildly on contact. (Leonard will verbally order intensity of concentration.)
2. One of the sitters upon feeling contact will announce it.
3. Spokesman will tell sitter what to concentrate on (such as increased pressure, movement, pulling of hair). Notice how degree of concentration affects contact. This is the only similarity your minds can conceive.

The rest of you will understand when you are part of us.

Comment: It is not clear from the record whether or not we attempted materialization that night. There is no record of any meetings on the 9th or 16th of September.

In Message #3 we continued to ask about materialization. This message also contains the first reference to curative powers.

Message #3, September 23, 1933

Continue tonight with the same seating order. The suggestion made by one of the sitters to surface an object with luminous paint is a splendid method for me to manifest my shape. By blocking out radiance you may observe my form in shadow. Before continuing let me make clear a few points. I told you before that I am a part of a common force. You seemed to assume that I am no identity in particular. You are wrong. In the lower forms of phenomena such as table movements, no one identity exists, but merely an exertion of force brought into play by the sitters. In the higher manifestations such as you are obtaining, the force molds itself into an identity with definite intelligence.

*Definite identity in form, intelligence.

*Knocks. Higher intelligence with a semblance of an identity.

*Average séance reaches this point.

*Weak movements. Common force.

*No manifestations.

The subconscious attitude of the sitters means almost everything to the success of the sitting. Time element does not enter into my existence. It is possible for me to be in three different places at the same time as easily as one. (For instance, holding Leonard's vest, pulling Leo's hair, pulling Gilbert's hair, and brushing across Horace's face and Tom's hand at the same time.) As to my curative powers . . . let me explain it. By this method the sitters concentrate on the desired cure. This sets into play a force generated with that basis of thought. The impression is transmitted and impregnated in the subconscious of the patient where it proceeds to work similarly to a radium bead imbedded in the center of a tumor, even though consciously the patient objects to the method.

Comment: The date the materialization effects referred to is uncertain. It might have been on September 2nd following Message #2 or on September 23 as implied in Message #3. Whenever it occurred, this is my recollection of how it came about. Len asked if we could be touched by the "force." When the response was positive, probably in the staccato announcing the readiness of the "force" to begin, there was some preliminary discussion as to who should be first. There was a prevailing sense of relief when Len volunteered. He rolled up the sleeve of one arm, then sat for a few moments in the dark before announcing that he felt several fingers stroking his forearm. We then asked that each of us be touched in turn. I recall that several of us in turn, including myself, were touched in the same

way but when it came to Gil's turn, he said that he was going to grab it when it came to him. No sooner were the words out of his mouth when we heard a loud slap, a surprised ejaculation from Gil, and frightened responses from all of us. We couldn't get the lights turned on fast enough. Gil seemed dazed. He had received a hard slap across the face. We were all shaken by what had happened. At one of the subsequent sittings [October 7th] we were informed that Gil was about to grab a dangerous "elemental" [destructive entities without any specific identity] and that Dr. Bindelof [of whose name we were later informed] had to intervene to prevent this from happening. When these events were recalled years later [Len, 1976], Len also described shaking hands with what felt like fingers that were both small and soft, as if it were a child's hand. The simultaneous touching as described in the message also occurred.

From the content of the message I infer we had also been inquiring about the healing power of the force. In terms of sheer excitement this session stood out for all of us.

September 30, 1933

The first message was brief: *Tonight you shall have astounding phenomena. To obtain materialization you must build the contact force to a certain pitch to achieve materialization.*

Continue.

Comment: There is no record of any materialization that night. It is possible, however, that what was described as occurring on the 23rd may have actually happened at this point.

Message #4, September 30, 1933

Thank you. A seemingly small thing like the mental address of the sitters also plays no small part. I explained before that I was and am still an entity that is entirely individual. I can govern the power of animation by your combined efforts. Do not question that point again.

My curative powers are extensive because I, unlike you, have the power to use to my pleasure, this force that so mystifies you. Any muscular disease with my aid, you can remedy. Replacement of limbs and the like, is of course, beyond even my scope. Cancer, a disease of uncontrollable cellular growth, may be rapidly cured by using the tremendous disintegrating power of the force (the retina muscles can easily be reshaped by the force). [Of interest to Tom.] To affect such cures, the patient is the subject of concentration. Presently the patient will feel a pressure at the diseased part. The pressure will increase tremendously, then diminish. One application should suffice. Nothing should be prepared for the force, not even the removal of glasses.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

PROCEED

Comment: Message #4 conveys our unknown friend's emphasis on still being an individual entity. Reading it at the time, I think we felt chided a bit as our questioning may have been too persistent. In the elaboration of the curative powers an incorrect reference was made to "retina muscles." Len picked this up. He was the only one who knew at the time that there were no retinal muscles.

October 7, 1933

Two lengthy messages were received. Again, judging from the content, the first came in response to our questions about the nature of postmortem existence. It is also obvious in his reference to healing that some efforts at healing had already begun. Tom, a regular member of the group, and Willie, a friend of mine who came for a while, wore glasses and needed strong corrective lenses. We were told they would be suitable subjects for improving their vision. After the sessions began, they each in turn reported feeling fingers gently massaging their eyes. I have a memory of Tom saying the fingers felt as if they were behind the eyeball. To the best of our recollections, there may have been a transitory subjective sense of improvement. In any case they both continued to need glasses. This message, in addition to stressing the curative powers now at our disposal, also gave an explanation of why Gilbert's face was slapped.

Message #5, October 7, 1933

1. Before you proceed, let me attempt to make clear to you a few points about which you are still doubtful. I say attempt because the fundamentals of our existence are so contrary that it is impossible for me to explain them to you in terms which are elementary to me. Your existence is physical and as long as it is such you will not be able to conceive of my life. When you question my existence and expect an explanation, you irritate me because you question a thing you cannot possibly comprehend. You lads are correct in the belief that you have brought into play a highly intelligent force. Undoubtedly the question comes to your minds as to why no other circle has ever secured such an intelligent force. Let me explain it this way. There are countless thousands of identities surrounding the earth practically all of which are malicious and destructive in their nature. Some are powerful enough to detach themselves from the common force and return to the earth and manifest themselves by physical destruction. It may astound you to know that many unexplained accidents such as the derailing of trains from fouled switches has been caused by groups of elementals which combine into one powerfully destructive force and operate in unison. Fortunately this occurs very seldom.

An average sitting creates conditions which make it momentarily pos-

sible for these identities to detach and weakly manifest themselves. But with the dissolution and breaking up of the concentration necessary they become powerless. To bring an intelligent force into play it requires a certain combination of sitters who by their combined thought repel the common identities and make possible the passage to earth of an intelligent identity. Each time you sit it becomes simpler for me to penetrate to you. You have previously to this, always associated with this force nothing but destruction, but believe me when I say you have befriended a person who is truly constructive. You are headed towards amazing revelations which you nor anyone else ever dreamed possible. Do not falter because of petty disbeliefs. Trust in my curative powers and cultivate them and you shall be a thousand fold rewarded. I said before that one application should suffice. This will be true when you have mastered the ability to concentrate harmoniously. Until then you will be able to use only a fraction of the force. (You see how powerless I am without you and how powerful you are with me). But rest assured the creative powers of this force are boundless.

2. Read after other sheet. I unaided am powerless to aid your people but through you I can work wonders. The adjustment of Tom's and Willie's eyes in the allotted time are but a triviality compared to what we will be able to do together. Believe in me is all I ask. Two weeks ago I slapped Gilbert's face for good reason. There were several contesting forces present that night. I would not have objected to Gilbert grabbing my hand realizing it was a gesture of curiosity, but the form he intended to grab was not mine but that of a destructive elemental at the time dominating in the room. The action wrought havoc on all sitters. Fortunately, the elementals are incapable of understanding any remarks or thoughts. At tonight's sitting, there must be no people present who were not present at last week's sitting. The identical seating order is to be used for the curing.

In answer to Larry's question: I cannot operate at any appreciable distance because of the dissipation of the operating force you create. I am limited to the scope of that force. As I depart from it, I gradually become part of the common force and lose my distinct physical identity. For instance, I am present in this room long before the sitting begins. I can observe your actions, but until you generate the force that gives me the power of physical animation, I cannot make my presence realized. In answer to Leonard's question: An ignorant force can manifest itself in light but it is absolutely detrimental to the operation of an intelligent identity.

Comment: The second message refers to inexplicable events that occurred in Larry's life around this time outside of the sittings. On several occasions watch crystals cracked for no obvious reason. This was also the first time the identity of the "force" was revealed. We were moved by the idealism that seemingly endured after death and his reference to the "boundless healing powers" that were to be revealed to us. If we hadn't

considered ourselves a very special group before we certainly did from that point on.

Message #6, October 7, 1933

A light automatically lowers the concentrating powers of the sitters. In answer to Gilbert's question: The heart muscles may easily be strengthened. Hope your mother will trust in me later. I hope never to give you cause for disbelief or distrust. Madam—as to fright, how can you say you fear me? I want to warn Larry that a powerfully destructive elemental is attaching itself to him and weakly manifesting itself by destroying his watch crystals, removing articles from bags he places them in, and seals and the like. To ward off this influence I prefer Larry to assume control of this intelligent force.

3. Before proceeding to further adjust the eyes of our two patients let me outline what I want them to do for the following week. Willie is to continue wearing his glasses until the next treatment when I shall prescribe further. There will not yet be an improvement. Tom, who will notice decisive effects the next morning, is to go without his glasses as long as the improvement remains. When his eyes begin to weaken, as they will, he must immediately return to his glasses. But he must not wear them until he feels actual discomfort in reading or the like. The question has been raised as to why I should want to do this. I shall explain, and in explaining shall indirectly answer many more of your questions. During my physical life I was a doctor. I loved my work as a mother adores its child. I dreamt of nothing day and night but curing the ills of humanity. I achieved little fame during my life and my hopes went unrealized. I soon after transcended into this unphysical existence, and oddly enough, still possessed the insatiable desire to aid you humans. Now I have at my perfect control this tremendous force with its boundless healing powers. It is humorous indeed to observe your doctors fumbling in their clumsy attempts to cure with their shiny, pretty steel knives and the like, when right before their very noses is a cure that will soon rock the world. May the honors go to you for discovering and developing it. Despite slight variations your circle creates a mental combination that is perfect for my penetration to the physical earth, while [sic] I have the power only when you give me the ability to manifest myself physically. As your concentration becomes more perfect so will the full power of the force become available to you. Believe me when I say you have befriended a truly constructive person who has the interest of humanity at heart. My name is Dr. Bindelof. For convenience you may call me that in the future. You have a panacea. Let us perfect it and give it to the world. Your results will leave no room for dispute. Will you be the disciples of a dead man? Now proceed but rest frequently to retain your mental strength.

4. You are now to proceed with the instructions I have given you.

October 14, 1933

From the time of the inception of the written messages, the circle of sitters had begun to grow and with that some irregularities in attendance. In the message to follow, we are berated for this. Dr. Bindelof had emphasized that his ability to contact us was contingent on the collective efforts of all of us and that any irregularity in attendance made for difficulties. The reference to causing any inconvenience was the result of my informing the group of difficulties I was having with my parents who didn't share my enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the séances.

As a consequence of Dr. Bindelof's earlier suggestion, Larry replaced Len as the spokesperson.

Message #7, October 14, 1933

To continue the séances [sic] in this manner is hopeless. I was to [sic] hasty in my conclusions. The harmony which existed at the previous sittings has completely disappeared [sic] and the inconsistency [sic] of the sitters only adds to the confusion. George's [sic] absence from the last sitting made the available curing force very slight. Willie's [sic] disbelief adds to the difficulty. Leos [sic] and Monte's [sic] absence make matters worse. The edition [addition, sic] is of no help in replacing the other sitters. If you wish tonight I will give you physical manifestations for the benefit [sic] of the new people. But my desire—curing—has been rendered impossible. I regret causing Monte any inconvenience. Larry's [sic] continued control of the sittings will soon discourage the elemental. Perhaps at some future date we may continue with our original experiment the curing. I beg of you boys never to do what you did in that tomb again. Believe me I had difficulty in doing you then.

Comment: The reference to the tomb involved an effort on the part of Gil, Len, Howard, and George (I was not a part of it, probably because by that time my family had moved away from Washington Heights where all the others lived) to hold a séance in a cemetery. As reconstructed by Howard in his written 1966 account: "We went to the nearby cemetery at 155th Street and Riverside Drive and stole into one of the open vaults. We tried to hold hands around, and suddenly some pebbles or stones were violently thrown against the side of the vault." At the reunion in 1966, Howard added: "My recollection is that those stones were thrown with terrific force and it was a frightening thing." The sitting and the visit to the cemetery ended abruptly at that point.

Note the spelling errors in Message #7. Errors in spelling and grammar were not infrequent.

October 28, 1933

There is a folder marked October 28th containing a miscellany of brief messages, some printed, some in script, but with no indications as to whether they did indeed occur on that date. The references of many of these messages remain unclear. One, for example, appeared in mirror-writing script: "A tree is bent." Many had to do with who should remain out and who should be included in the various sittings that evening. What follows is a summary of that session, prepared at the time but never completed.

Summary of Session, October 28, 1933

We were answered by a Dr. Rinchner, a friend of the doctor, who wrote that he was "weak." However, after continued sitting, we were reached by Dr. Bindelof. We asked, among other things, why we had such poor results in the previous sitting. It answered [by spelling] Monty. Later, we pursued this line of questioning by asking if it would be all right for Monty [sic] to sit without his parents' consent. "No," was the answer. He understood Monty's [sic] problem, he said, but he could not foresee if his parents would ever consent, and if Lenny would have any effects on them. He agreed that it was greatly to Monty's [sic] benefit [sic] to sit, and that it would be all right, from a cosmic point of view, if he sat without his parents' knowledge [apparently contradicting his earlier statement — M. U.]. Also, he said that we could, if Monty [sic] could not possibly attend, experiment with other persons to ascertain if they could contribute to the circle.

Scattered answers: To Tom: If you wish to be free from your morbid thoughts do not be so introspective. Furthermore, the doctor assured Tom that he would "go to sleep" the following year, a problem the consequences of which were bothering Tom very much. Later, when Tom wished to know if the doctor would point out any sitter who would "have a happy life" [Tom later explained that the word "success" was in his mind], Dr. Bindelof patted his head and explained to Lenny that it was a paternal gesture.

Lenny: Does that part of the soul which lives after death "go out" in a séance to contact with a dead spirit?

Dr. B: Yes.²¹

Lenny: Do any of us have that power?

Dr. B: Yes. [He then knocked at the mention of Larry's name to say that he was the person who could do that. This was the explanation for the attachment of an elemental to Larry. The fact that séances were held

²¹ Presumably this and subsequent answers were obtained by knocks in response to calling out letters of the alphabet.

without Larry was not important. Once before, he wrote that mediums were not essential but important to sittings.]

Willie: Can I improve my memory?

Dr. B: Yes, by associations.

Howard: You say that only people who during life have sat at seances will have a life after death with intelligent manifestations. What then of people who know nothing of spiritualism. What becomes of them?

Dr. B: They become elementals.

Howard: Is their life happy?

Dr. B: [No definite answer. Wrote out: You think of your parents.]

Larry: Is [sic] my morbid thoughts

November 4, 1933

The following message was obtained.

Message #8, November 4, 1933

I do wish you lads would come to some decision as to the place you intend to hold the sittings. It is difficult for me to become accustomed to different surroundings every week. Larry is completely rid of his elemental and has little cause for future worry in that respect. I want Tom to stop leading such a morbid existence. Tom, you are becoming irrational and foolish. If your heart calls for the open fields and tree-lined roads, then take to them. Your nature revolts against conventional and sophisticated things. Live as your heart tells you.

You have never gotten any results with the luminous paper because the radiations were always too intense. Soften them so that they are barely visible.

If you construct the proper device I can speak with you.

Monte, please do not argue with your family. Rather give this up.

Now, you are to rest. We will proceed with the curing. Rest after this and then we will have further messages and phenomena.

Comment: Several points in Message #8 require further explanation. Concerning the location of the sittings, we had occasionally shifted the location to Len's home or Tom's.

Dr. Bindelof seemed to have taken a special interest in Tom and here responds to some of the issues troubling Tom.

We had tried unsuccessfully using phosphorescent paper in the hope of seeing evidence of materialization.

The reference to me again had to do with my concern with my parents' opposition to my attending the seances. At some point in the summer I had asked whether I should continue to come or give up coming. My recollection is that I did not ask this question aloud but simply thought it. The word "neither" then appeared on the paper. Not being satisfied with this re-

The Bindelof Sitter Group

sponse, I again silently thought. What should I do that might convince my parents to change their attitude? The next written message read: "A note from Overstreet."

Comment: Professor Harry Overstreet was chair of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology at City College at the time. In August of 1933 I had taken a course in philosophy and somehow had gotten enough courage to write to him and tell him about the results we had been having with the table and photographs. This was his reply:

September 19, 1933

Mr. Montague Ullman
525 West End Avenue
New York City

My dear Mr. Ullman:

I have only just returned from California and find your letter of August 17 upon my desk. Please forgive the apparent discourtesy of my long delay in replying to it.

I am afraid that I cannot give you any really serviceable advice. These matters are all so mysterious that one simply has to go ahead and experiment as best he can. Some time after the beginning of the term, if you will be good enough to drop into my office on an afternoon, I shall be most happy to talk the whole matter over with you.

Sincerely,

H. A. Overstreet

HAO:jc

After receiving the letter I went to see him and was surprised to learn that he had a serious interest in psychical research.

There were a number of brief messages that I believed occurred at some point in this session indicating Dr. Bindelof was having difficulty reaching us because of interfering entities. These messages were seemingly scribbled with difficulty:

"Help."

"Help me please."

"Goodbye Bindelof."

"You shall never again get Bindelof."

"Its [sic] terribly hard."

"Fools" [sic].

"That other man is present."

"Help me please Bindelof."

"Thank God you boys did not leave me Bindelof."

"We've won."

Comment: Subsequent to this session the resistance I had encountered from my parents lessened either in the face of my determination to continue or because of Dr. Overstreet's interest in both.

November 11, 1933

In Message #9 (see Fig. 8 for written version), Dr. Bindelof refers to the difficulties encountered the week before. He also drew a diagram of the apparatus we were to build for his voice to come through to us. There is no record of what curative efforts went on that night.

Message #9, November 11, 1933

I cannot thank you enough for the way you aided me last week. Let me warn you that should that chap return again and frustrate my attempts to secure contact with you, do not dissolve the sitting until you have enabled me to reach you. If you act contrary to this advice, you may erect a permanent barrier between us. I hope Tom will forgive me for not treating his eyes last week but I was so exhausted by that encounter that I did not have the strength (you boys were also mentally fatigued). I shall try to make up for it this week, Tom. I shall suggest a device which you can construct at a nominal cost so that I may be able to speak with you.

You may proceed with the curing.

November 18, 1933

Dr. Bindelof was still testy about our behavior. The questions we put to him and the brief message received are noted in the minutes of what went on that night. What follows are the minutes as prepared at the time.

Record of the Séance, November 18, 1933

The séance began shortly after nine with Larry as spokesman. As soon as the staccato was heard, the doctor preempted control by writing message number one. [A reprimand of Thomas.] After the message was read, Thomas made an effort to apologize which the doctor did not recognize. The spokesman asked if we might proceed with the cures. The doctor said "no." When asked if we could try later, we discovered he didn't care. On further questioning, the doctor wrote: "I'm discouraged with the whole business." This called for a lot of comment on the part of the sitters. The doctor expanded upon this by writing, "You're all the same." When questioned concerning the meaning of the last message he had asked, "Where is the tube?" "Where are your notes?" It was discovered that the doctor was displeased with our failure to bring promised apparatus. Leonard asked if the fault was his and the doctor stated that it was. Leonard apologized, promised that the apparatus would be ready at the next sitting, and inquired if we might proceed with the curing. The doctor responded

The Bindelof Sitter Group

negatively and when asked if he lost interest in curing, he spelled out: "Don't care." Larry asked if it was because we were unscientific. The doctor rapped once and we turned on the light to decide what course we should pursue. The sitters drew up a plan for conducting the séance and we returned. The doctor approved the plan and wrote a message discussing the conversation that had taken place during the interim. On the suggestion of the spokesman, he listed the facts he wished observed in the séance room during the curing.

We said good night and ended the séance.

Comment: A brief message obtained in this session referred to two experiments in dematerialization, neither of which was successful. At one point, we sought Dr. Bindelof's cooperation in carrying out an experiment Len had prepared. We placed a sealed and locked box on the table with a penny resting on top. The idea was to have the penny dematerialize and appear in the box. Dr. Bindelof's response to this was a written note saying: "This is assinine." [sic]. The second was a failed effort to get two solid bracelets to connect.

November 22, 1933

This was apparently an interim meeting. The only record available is a brief account written in pencil and not completely decipherable about what went on. It began with a list of who was there: Larry, Lenny, Tom, Howard, Willie, George, Leo, Gilbert, Monte and Ellie. Having decided sometime before to become the Bindelof Society, we apparently had prepared a constitution. The minutes taken at the time read as follows:

Minutes of the Meeting, November 22, 9:30

Constitution accepted by all. All present. Minutes read. Short wait—message received.

Dr. B. advised spreading knowledge of séance and in addition told us to go ahead with tube—after receiving short message: "I wanted it now." Tube inserted in chandelier trumpet suspended horizontally [referring to what Len had rigged up to hear Dr. Bindelof - M. U.]. Doctor wrote: "For heavens [sic] awake, the things [sic] too high." After adjusted, received message and a diagram as to how it should be.

Dr. B. blew through trumpet but that was the only sound emitted. On another page was added, "First attempt with tube was unsuccessful."

Comment: All of the later accounts are in agreement that a loud breath sound was all that ever came of our efforts at getting Dr. Bindelof to

vocalize. With regard to the constitution, there are no copies extant and no one has a clear idea of what was in it.

November 25, 1933

We had apparently become quite organized by this time. Committees had been formed, and for the first time an agenda was set up in advance.

Procedure for the Night of November 25, 1933

1. Demonstration of the talking apparatus.
2. Eye cures.
3. Questioning:

(a) About the soul

The secular [securing; sic] of an explanation in writing of the explanation of the soul, its relation to the subconscious, the characteristics retained by different souls, and the acquired attributes, if any.

(b) If writing is refused, the spokesman will have to resort to individual questions such as:

Does the soul merely consist of the subconscious mind?

If not—List the other features you attribute to the soul, e.g., Does the soul have all the attributes of the mind during life?

If yes—Are there any added attributes?

If yes—List them.

If yes—Clarify and complete our concept of the subconscious.

(c) Evolution and origin of the soul:

Did the soul originate simultaneously with the first life cell?

If not—Tell us where and how the soul did originate and if it originated before or after life.

If yes—Did the soul develop as did this first cell, in other words, did the soul undergo evolution as did the material life?

If not—Is our soul identical with the souls of lower forms?

If not—Wherein and why should it differ, being that it didn't undergo evolution?

4. Miscellaneous:

Would the doctor expect us to control certain factors he mentioned such as humidity and room temperature?

Secural of [Securing; sic] a written explanation of the mechanism of the eye cures.

Respectfully submitted,
Monte Ullman
Committee for Planning

Comment: Message #10 received in response.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

Message #10, November 25, 1933

Ah! Now you have the idea. System. The business-like method you have prepared must be adhered to. I wish to thank you for the honor you have bestowed upon me [sic] by naming your society in my behalf. First, I shall attempt to give you a demonstration of the speaking tube. Let me explain to you about the soul. The soul as you call it is nothing more than the force in an organism the [sic] gives it the breath of life, its existence [sic] is perpetual. The soul develops along with the mind of the organism. The soul stops developing at the point at which the physical body perishes. The intelligence of the being is largely a part of the soul so naturally this element continues to exist [sic] within. In lower animals while the soul exists [sic] the accompanying [sic] intelligence is so small that when the physical part is lost the soul and intelligence are incapable [sic] of retaining any individuality.

Larry has struck the right idea. People must become interested in our Society. It must become talked about. As soon as possible try to have visitors at each séance provided the committee [sic] of admissions obtains the circles [sic] unanimous consent but there must be no mental contradictions [sic] for a persons [sic] presence.

While I can manifest myself well despite the temperature the curative force I intend to use is bound by physical conditions equally as much [as] radio and other type waves. The proper temperature and humidity I have myself yet to ascertain. At the ideal conditions the patient will feel sort of a pin-prick at the time of contact. The exact conditions at each sitting **MUST BE RECORDED** for future reference.

Comment: Dr. Bindelof had earlier requested that we keep a record of the temperature and humidity of the room during the sitting. The minutes taken at the time read as follows:

Minutes of the Meeting, November 25, 1933

Society meeting. Roll called, all members present. Minutes of the last meeting submitted and accepted. The report of the Committee of Records and Appropriations proposed dues for this week of \$.25. Report accepted. Committee on Planning presented a constitution which was also accepted. Apparatus (trumpet) demonstrated and approved.

Minutes of the Séance, November 25, 1933

Séance: After a short wait, message #10 was received. Approved of the systematic routine, advised spreading knowledge and additional sitters each week. Wrote briefly concerning the nature of the soul. An apology was offered by the spokesman for the ACCIDENTAL BREAKING²² of

²²Caps in the original. M. U.

the thermometer and our present inability to record temperature and humidity. The doctor expressed his desire to have it at the present sitting. We apologized again. The doctor instructed us to place the apparatus on the lower shelf of the table. We did this but the doctor found it impracticable. He suggested elevating it. We did so, but were told that it was too high. We lowered it. The doctor attempted to speak but achieved nothing but a blowing sound. He was absent for a short time and finally wrote that the apparatus was too primitive and he was sorry but it could not be used (see Figure 8).

November 29, 1933

This was also an interim session. The minutes of the session are presented as they were prepared at the time.

Minutes of the Séance, November 29, 1933

Séance began at 8:40. Monty [sic], William and Tom absent. The doctor arrived in ten minutes with Larry taking control. Message #11 received directly [without being requested - M. U.]. In view of the contents of this message, it was not deemed necessary to exclude Tom who sat for the rest of the evening. The following questions were asked:

Q. Was mind force and matter co-eternal?

A. No.

Q. Are any two of these co-eternal?

A. Yes.

Q. Will you please knock at the two correct words?

A. A knock for soul and one for force.

Q. Did matter originate simply from the combination of mind and force?

A. I shall explain in detail on Saturday.

Q. Do you know whether any of the prevalent theories concerning the origin of this solar system are correct?

A. No.

[After many and complex questions it was ascertained that through true art one may develop one's soul.]

Q. Are there any poets who are now intelligent identities?

A. Yes.

Q. Does Keats exist now as an intelligent identity?

A. If you will wait I shall find out.

Comment: A short rest was taken after which the doctor was asked if he had obtained information concerning Keats. By questioning it was ascertained that the doctor would have that information Saturday.

Q. Can you manifest yourself OUTSIDE of the séance room?

A. No.

Q. Can any spirits manifest themselves physically?

A. Yes. Yes, call them earth-bound spirits.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

[Through a long line of questioning it was ascertained that the photographic plates were affected by a form of energy generated by the minds of the sitters. Any object used serves mainly as a basis of thought. This form of energy is distinct and resembles electricity slightly. We had asked if he could name it and the doctor spelled out "no word for it."]

Q. Is there any mechanism other than the photographic plates which will manifest this form of energy?

A. Doctor wrote, "Movements of gold leaf by the force."

Comment: After a series of questions we learned that Larry was strongly telepathic, that Tom and Ellie were mildly so. Larry discovered that many of the questions which had troubled his mind during the week and to which an answer was mentally offered were answered by the Dr. We also discovered that interpretations of the Dr. [sic] actions by the sitters at the séance table were offered by the Dr. We discovered that, to his knowledge, no spirit possessed clairvoyant powers.

Message #11, November 29, 1933

[The paper folded four ways and crumpled. Message written on both sides of sheet.]

William has practically [sic] answered for my actions last week. That was the thread which broke the camels [sic] back so to speak. You may rest assured Larry that I hold no grievance [sic] against you for making the remark. I don't think it will be necessary to exclude Tom. However, that is up to the committee to decide. I would prefer it if no further permanent additions were made to the circle but rather we must reduce it to the smallest group possible so that we may have room for visitors and patients. Larry, I want to say a word about your teeth. At the rate you are going, you will lose every tooth in your head in about 5 years. The lack of calcium in your body is amazing. It is a wonder to me your teeth do not break when you chew. You must eat green vegetables [sic], lettuce especially. Learn to like them. You must have a dentist attend to your front teeth also. Now about the cures. Let us proceed slowly until we find the correct conditions. For example cures such as Larry's, correct temperature and humidity are not vital but in a difficult procedure [sic] such as eye cures where muscles must be delicately reshaped, perfect climatic control is absolutely necessary to secure the maximum powers of the force. We must find them by experimentation. I am afraid that the only method by which I will be able to speak with you is by a microphonic amplification system. The faint vibrations close against the diaphragm must be magnified to be audible [sic]. [word illegible - M. U.] Gilbert, I have no objection to being merely [sic] as you put it, so that we may carry on our work. The rest of the sitting is in the hands of the committee for planning.

Comment: Among the brief messages that occurred that night were the words "Pythagorean triangle." This came in response to our question about

life on Mars. We took this to mean there was life on Mars and that the triangle was a mutually understandable symbol.

With the wisdom of hindsight, that answer seems more like the response to an adolescent fantasy than something to be taken seriously—but are we ready to say life never existed on Mars?

This session also included our first case report.

Case #1, November 29, 1933

Name of Patient: Larry Levin

Case: During the day of November 29, 1933 the patient suffered from a severe ache in the right lower jaw. This was supposedly due to an abscessed molar. The doctor treated the jaw. The patient noticed extreme pressure applied below the diseased tooth. This application of pressure and massage were the only observable methods of treatment employed. The duration of the treatment was approximately three minutes.

The patient experienced immediate relief. The acute pain disappeared during the treatment and a dull residual ache remained for a period of about ten minutes after which the patient's sensations were normal.

The doctor advised in his first message that Larry increase the amount of green vegetables in his diet. He also spoke of increasing the amount of calcium, magnesium, and phosphates in his body. He also told the patient to visit a dentist.

December 2, 1933

Extant are the minutes and messages noted in the minutes. A thermometer and hydrometer had been placed on one wall of the bedroom at the beginning of the sitting and readings were taken at intervals throughout the sitting and were noted in the minutes. Our efforts at producing sounds continued. The minutes contain the first detailed description of the apparatus we used. Only a blowing sound came through.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPARATUS

The microphone was suspended from the ceiling so that it hung low above the center of the table. The amplification unit was placed on top of the piano. During the experiment, the microphone swung back and forth from time to time touching the sitters. Towards the end of the experiment the microphone was carried around Gilbert's head with the mike touching the back of his neck.

Message #12, December 2, 1933

[Paper folded six ways and crumpled. Message written on both sides of paper. This is badly stained in places as though it had been wet. — M.U.]

The Bindelof Sitter Group

I am glad to see that you have finally obtained the hydrometer. Now we may continue experimenting with the various temperatures and humidities. While I appreciate your having gotten the microphone, I would rather you would not employ these methods in the future, Gilbert. In some cases when I knock I partly become semi-solid. Part of this substance may at times protrude from beneath the table. That is what George felt about his legs and what Tom and Gilbert observed. If any of you should notice it in the future please do not disrupt the concentration because of it. For photography you may use 2 [not sure of this number - M. U.] techniques, one to expose the plate in a dark room for about 10 minutes. In this case only the other presence will be visible, not the sitters. To secure pictures of the sitters also you must use about a 20-30 second exposure in a fairly light room. The other presences will reproduce in spite of this light. You may have to try several plates before you get results.

Telepathy is nothing more than the emitting of mental vibrations of a certain frequency which are reinterpreted in another mind harmoniously [sic] attuned. If you ascertain these vibrations and reproduce them mechanically you can produce the illusion of thought in a mind attuned to those vibrations. The receptivity of different mind [sic] for these impulses varies considerably. The mind also generates and emits [sic] a force that radiates in straight lines. When an image like a bottle is thought of certain amounts of the ray are not emitted, and where they do not strike, the plate is not affected. This radiation [sic] may be the shape of a bottle. I am seeking answers to your difficult questions on the soul. I will have them later. Proceed with the temperature and microphone experiments.

Comment: The reference to the bottle referred to one of our thought-photography experiments reported in Part II.

December 9, 1933

The minutes of the meeting and of the séance, and the brief messages referred to are here extant.

Minutes of the Meeting, December 9, 1933

Roll call showed all members present. The apparatus constructed last week was at hand. The committee proposed Mrs. Lauer as a patient. She was admitted to the séance that night by unanimous vote.

Minutes of the Séance, December 9, 1933

The séance began at 9:25. After about 10 minutes rather weak knocks were heard but it was impossible to ascertain the identity of the presence. A short rest was taken and upon resuming the sitting a feebly written

message was received saying, "Tom out. Leo in." All members except Horace and Leo were sitting when this message was received. A rest was taken until Leo returned. According to the doctor's instructions, Tom was excluded for the rest of the evening. At 10:40, the sitting was resumed. After an explanation of the patient's case [Mrs. Lauer suffering from a nervous insomnia], the doctor proceeded with a treatment which consisted of a massage of varying pressures across the skull, temple and nape of the neck. By answering direct questions, the doctor stated that the necessity of additional treatments depended upon results obtained. Another rest was taken. Upon returning, we endeavored to go ahead with Monty's [sic] cure but we learned that the doctor wanted to clear up something first. He spelled out Horace, but even after a long series of questions, we failed to discover precisely what was the matter. Finally, he agreed to let the matter drop and treated Monty's [sic] eyes. Again, the circle rested. When we returned, we failed to obtain results for some time. Finally the doctor wrote: "Light in hall." It was discovered that light which had filtered into the room from the outside was the cause of the delay. The situation was remedied and we proceeded with the talking experiment using the same apparatus as was used last week. This apparatus consisted of a microphone and three-volt battery in series connected in parallel with the resistor across the grid and cathode of the -58 detector tube folled [sic] by a -47 output tube. Sounds were heard which could be duplicated by blowing drafts of air against the diaphragm of the microphone. No consonant or vowel values were distinguishable. After a series of attempts to make intelligible sounds, the doctor wrote message: "Not sensitive enough. Use oscillator" [oscillator was spelled ocil-]. After the conclusion of this experiment the group adjourned.

Comment: In an interview with Len's mother, Mrs. Lauer [Mrs. Pinco], in 1971, she didn't recall being treated for insomnia. Her husband, who was present at the interview, reminded her she had spoken to him about receiving a treatment for headache and that she felt fingers gently massaging her forehead and head.

December 16, 1933

We once again renewed our interest in photography. We received a long message from Dr. Bindelof detailing the procedure for obtaining these pictures. All were taken in accordance with his instructions. The first was to be a picture of himself, the second of what he referred to as the "common force" which was said to pervade the room, and the third was a picture [puzzling in retrospect] of "outside identities." The message also commented on his curative efforts with Mrs. Lauer. I was present throughout the sitting but not at the business meeting held after the sitting. There were also several brief written messages, the last of which was noted in the minutes: "Please forgive me, I am so tired." The session ended with another experiment with the sound equipment. Again, only a blowing sound was heard.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

The picture of Dr. Bindelof (see Figure 9) came out looking like a distinguished Victorian gentleman. In the second picture of the room [not reproducible], in addition to the irregular cloud-like spots, the hydrometer on the wall was clearly visible. The surface of the table with our hands resting on it could be made out in the original print but not in the reproduction. The third picture [not reproducible] was puzzling. In the original, there seemed to be a group of helmeted soldiers kneeling and taking aim. This does not show up in the reproduction.



Fig. 9. A psychic photograph of Dr. Bindelof.

The minutes were lengthy but were largely devoted to our efforts at photography following the detailed procedure outlined in Message #13.

Message #13, December 16, 1933

Tonight, in view of the fact that we have so much to do, we must not spend too much time on any one experiment. The photography requiring the most energy would best be done. First, let me explain a little more in detail what I want done. First, I shall attempt to give you a picture of myself.

Process:

1. Use full aperture in total darkness.
2. Set focus for five foot point, focal clarity to be at the center of the table.
3. Set plate. Remove cover.
4. Open lens in total darkness for period of 20-30 seconds.
5. Develop.

Second: Picture of common force.

1. Focus universal.
2. Distance enough to include entire group (sitters).
3. 75 watts 20-30 seconds.
4. You should observe in

Third: Picture of outside identities.

1. Universal focus.
2. Darkness (intelligent identities cannot be photo-graphed [sic] in light).

That will be all for the photography. If no results are obtained this time, try again next week. Please remember this method.

About Mrs. Lauer (she is not to hear this). Tom undid my work last week. She would have slept perfectly as she did the first night had Tom not given her a counter suggestion. Her case is 9/10ths mental. The 1/10th physical disorder I corrected and also induced a mental conviction of cure. She slept perfectly. Tom told her that perhaps it was just exhaustion that induced sleep. This destroyed the mental belief and the 1/10th physical correction could not overcome the 9/10th mental contradiction. In a physical disease, however, the odds are reversed. Thomas has become absolutely antagonistic. I suggest his complete removal and also that he be kept in complete ignorance as to the circle's results.

While I should like Horace in the circle, his mental vibrations unbalance the unit making communication difficult. However, if he does not object, he may sit in the room away from the table or in the hall if he chooses. I hope he will accept these terms. I am still planning complete answers to your questions on the soul.

(All plate loading and developing to be witnessed so that it may be reported as such on the records.)

Proceed.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

December 23, 1933

Two messages were received. Message #14 refers to curative efforts with Len's mother [Mrs. Lauer] and Horace's mother [Mrs. Joseph]. Both women wrote notes about their experience.

Statement by Mrs. Lauer

I have been troubled with insomnia for the past 3 years. These past 6 months it has grown worse. My son, Leonard, suggested I try a cure, by sitting with them. After being told of the curative powers of this wonderful and rare phenomena, I consented.

By the time I was ready for my third treatment, I felt very confident about the cure and had a feeling of being treated by someone I knew and for whom I have a deep and sincere regard.

I am very enthusiastic, also grateful, and feel that the future holds much for this phenomena [sic]. On the whole, I am sleeping better and have hopes of complete cure.

Sincerely,
Helen P. Lauer

Statement by Mrs. Joseph, January 13, 1934

On December 23rd, 1933, I attended a meeting of "The Bindelof Psychical Society." Dr. Bindelof was asked to give me a treatment for a stomach condition. Dr. B. then came to me and pressed heavily on the top of my head, the sides of the head, and then the forehead. The day following the treatment, I noticed great relief from an exhausted feeling due to nerves. I had been troubled with that for five years and can truly say that after the treatment, I felt free of that condition.

The second treatment differed from the first one. There was apparently no agent (word indecipherable—M. U.) hand, but I heard rumblings from within. The result was beneficial.

The third treatment consisted of pressure on the head. The relief from the nervous exhaustion continued and the stomach condition is gradually becoming better.

Mrs. A. P. J. Hortense Joseph
38 Fort Washington Avenue
New York, NY

Comment: The minutes noted the humidity readings and the sequence of treatments. Reference is made to a number of brief messages no longer extant.

Message #14, December 23, 1933

Monte's absence this evening renders the group too weak to take photographs. I suggest we leave that for some other time. I hardly think

Mrs. Lauer will need more than one more treatment. Gradually, her sleep will become more and more profound until she obtains perfect slumber. There are no objections to sitting in Tom's circle Sunday Leonard, only don't make it customary because it drains tremendously on your mental vitality when the mental combination of sitters is not perfect. I shall not manifest myself at any of those séances. However, I wish Tom the best of luck in his enterprise about the cures.

Please read aloud the temperature and humidity during each of Mrs. Lauer's treatments. This can be done just before the room is made dark. While those readings were rather good, they still are not perfect for complete utilization of the force.

I want to take this opportunity to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas. You may now proceed as you wish. Should you attempt a cure for Mrs. Joseph, she must first state her condition in her own words.

December 30, 1933

Message #15 received.

Message #15, December 30, 1933

I shall give you a diagnosis of Mrs. Joseph's trouble. You will then be able to better understand my method of treatment. The nerve fibers in the stomach which control the muscles of digestion have been partially destroyed most likely by continued worrying and nervousness. The automatic brain impulses which are relayed to the digestive muscles in the stomach through these destroyed fibers fail to set the muscles into operation because of the condition of these nerves, consequently, practically all of the digesting must be done by the small intestines. This will almost infallibly cause the person great distress. I sent growth stimulating impulses from the brain to these nerve ends [that] in a short time will fully revive them. In the meantime, you must eat no acidic foods such as pickles, etc. This only helps destroy the weakened fibers. I also suggest you stop another very useless and futile thing—worrying.

If Mrs. Lauer will recall, she at one time alone developed enough energy for me to almost manifest myself physically.

You may now proceed as you choose.

Comment: The minutes again correlate humidity readings with reference to the treatment given. What follows is a statement submitted by Leo, a cousin of Leo's, and one of the early sitters, about his treatment.

Statement by Leo Keiser, December 30, 1933

As is the custom and order of proceedings, I took the place between Leonard and Gilbert for the continuation of the treatments the Doctor had begun about

two months previous. The Doctor first put his hand on my head and moved it from there to my forehead. He pushed my forehead back and I, thinking that he wished to apply pressure to that region, resisted him. He then left my forehead and wrote that I should not resist him. The lights went out and I again felt his hand on the top of my head. He then pushed my head back and I felt his fingers at a point upon the neck where the thyroid glands are situated. He left that spot after a few seconds. I felt his hand upon my head. He pushed my head down and then I felt pressure upon the top of my head. He mussed my hair up and then when he was through with the treatment, he brushed it back into place again.

Comment: The sittings continued into 1934 with 10 sittings occurring between January 6th and April 7th. Contact with Dr. Bindelof was more and more erratic as other entities seemed to intervene. Long messages were obtained on January 6th [Message #16] and January 20th [Message #17]. There were also numerous short messages. For the sake of brevity and because much of what occurred continued the successes and failures already described, I will limit this account to a few of the highlights.

TERMINATION PHASE (JANUARY-APRIL 1934)

January 6, 1934

Description by George of being treated for an injury to his hand. He felt a "warm moist trembling hand" flexing his wrist and then massaging his hand and wrist.

Message #16 received.

Message #16, January 6, 1934

Your questions concerning the soul are no easy task to answer. You ask explanations of life itself, of the ethereal substance that affords you the power of thought and existence. Frankly, I sorely suspect my ability for the work you have assigned me, but, nevertheless, you may be assured that these answers constitute a most earnest effort to gratify your requests.

The soul itself exists quite independently of matter. It is an intangible force ever present in space (the word soul is an entirely too poetic term for such a physical phenomenon. Perhaps you can devise a more suitable name?). I do not know when the force came into existence or of what it is the result, but it would be a reasonable supposition to call it beginless [sic] (what a poor definition) and infinite. The force in this state is entirely potential. It becomes kinetic only when it combines with some substance which by its chemical construction gives this force the power to manifest itself through the action of the substance with which it has united. During the embryonic development of a being, a portion of this force at a certain period in the creation when the chemical constituency is exact combines

with the previously dormant matter and by this combination gives the animal the power of life. The finer and more precise the chemical construction the more perfect the combination with the force and as a result a more intelligent person. As the chemical combination becomes more simple, such as in the lower animals and plants, the mentality becomes comparatively more simple because of the poor combination with the force. The soul then begins its development in the mind of the person it is housed in. As the chemical construction of the person weakens and changes as a result of age or disease, the force slowly separates itself from the body. It finally departs completely, rendering the body lifeless. This intelligence continues to exist however in the same sphere that it did originally with the exception that it now bears the mental characteristics of the person in which it developed. It can still think and reason but it cannot manifest itself physically for reasons I have stated in other messages. The rest of its existence I have told you previously.

I sincerely hope this message answers in some way your questions on the subject. While the foregoing message may appear rather short, believe me it is the result of much investigation.

You may now proceed as you wish.

I hope there is a possibility you boys will reconsider Monte's vote. However, that is entirely up to you. [Subject of vote no longer recalled - M. U.]

January 13, 1934

Brief printed messages, some indecipherable. References to seating arrangements and earlier advice to someone about going to the dentist.

January 20, 1934

Difficulty was encountered reaching Dr. Bindelof before message #17 was obtained.

Message #17, January 20, 1934

I wish to apologize to you for my failure to use the microphone. We started so late in the evening that by the time I was ready to use it, you were all completely exhausted. I suggest we leave this experiment and the photography for a future date when we have better facilities. While they are interesting, they are quite unimportant. I have neglected to tell you why I seemingly crumple the paper after a message such as this. The explanation may confound you, but I shall endeavor to tell you anyhow. When you hear the pencil scratching at that terrific speed you have presumed that I am writing at that speed. I am actually writing at a normal rate—here is what

happens: a type of force (what it is I do not quite know myself) forms a sphere around the paper and pencil when I write a message that you approximate would take about twenty minutes to print. It does take me twenty minutes, but the sphere reduces the time factor, so as to make the writing to appear to have been done in less than a minute. In other words, twenty minutes work can be done in twenty minutes yet done in one minute even though it still took twenty minutes to perform. As for the consumption of energy—twenty minutes of energy is consumed in one minute. When this force dissipates, it does what you might say—collapses or contracts toward the center of the sphere drawing the paper in with it, and crushing it to the extent you observe. Strangely enough, the quality of the writing is improved with the use of this force. In the short messages you will notice the pencil scratches at a normal rate and the paper does not crumple. This is because the force is not employed. To use this force represents a terrific drain on the sitters. Therefore, it is advisable to use it only once and at the beginning of the sitting. I doubt if it could be done twice at one sitting. That is why I have refused to answer many of your questions by writing during the séance.

About the cures.

Mrs. Joseph should be all right after one more treatment. What we must do now is secure a person with a definite ailment, preferably malignant. (The sooner we get started on that the better.) The first patient must be harmoniously attuned to the entire idea. (While a negative person can be cured, it takes much longer.) An interesting point that has entirely escaped me. A person on his deathbed may be revived and carried through the crucial period by excessive heart stimulation. (Perhaps we can make the circle a portable medicinal-kit.)

Now, about that unexpected mid-week sitting. I had better tell you that is a rather foolish practice. Rather than let Elly [sic] suffer any pain, I manifested myself but at the risk of losing further contact with you. You opened wide for harmful and alien identities. With such a small circle, their passage is much easier than mine and thus having attuned themselves, permanently interfere if not completely ruin our sittings.

Incidentally, Leonard and Ellie²³ don't fall to [sic] far behind on your notes.

You may now proceed as you choose.

That baby should have been in the incubator last week. It was sheer lunacy to remove it from an environment that was so obviously beneficial; and on top of that to expect a child to digest a protein diet when it was not fully developed enough to stop the sugar diet—the man is crazy. [No recall about the incubator baby - M. U.]

²³Note the two different spellings of Ellie's name.

January 27, 1934

Mrs. Lauer's and Mrs. Joseph's treatments continued. Minutes refer to the megaphone being carried around over the heads of the sitters. An indistinguishable sound was heard over the megaphone.

February 3, 1934

Following a brief written note in which Dr. Bindelof thanked Mrs. Joseph for the letter she had written, contact was lost for most of the evening. A few brief messages occurred at the end.

February 10, 1934

Failure to contact Dr. Bindelof. Short messages signed by Dr. Rinchner, a friend of Dr. Bindelof, who promised to look for the doctor. Minutes included the following: "During the séance the following phenomena occurred: watch was removed from Leonard's wrist and carried around the table, twisted and toyed with and reset to read 3:16, and returned to owner's lap."

February 17, 1934

Difficulty reaching Dr. Bindelof until the end when a brief message came to the effect he would explain his absence next week. Brief messages from Dr. Rinchner and one signed in script "BAD!"

February 24, 1934

A young woman, Marianne Meader, visiting from Germany, had joined the group sometime in January, 1934. She prepared the minutes of the session.

Minutes of the Meeting, February 24, 1934

After a short conference with the officers, the chairman called the meeting to order at 11:35 and announced that a proposal had been made to disband and to return all money paid in form of dues. Reasons: Séances had been progressing rapidly until a short time ago when new members had been admitted. Since then the results had been poor. Also, nothing had been done in finding cases the doctor had asked for.

The floor was opened for discussion and then votes were taken, resulting in a 6:3 vote in favor of disbanding.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

The meeting was adjourned after announcement had been made that the money will be refunded on Saturday, March 3, 1934.

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Meader

March 31, 1934

There were no further meetings until March 31, 1934 when the New Bindelof Society was formed. This and one other meeting of the new society were held at the Hotel Ansonia where Marianne Meader was residing. She prepared the minutes which noted table movements, a pencil being thrown, a brief message signed by Mr. Bad, levitation, and the paper crumpled. One brief message was presented in mirror writing: "Bindelof not here, look again." The minutes record the following toward the end of the sitting: "Larry took control, spoke to Dr. Bindelof, and explained why the sittings had been broken up, and the society disbanded." At the very end of the session a brief message from Dr. Bindelof was obtained in response to Larry's request that he treat his mother who had developed a tumor. Dr. Bindelof's response was "not as a patient, as a sitter."

April 7, 1934

A short message was received in script: "There is no sence [sic] sitting." When asked to clarify this, the same identity took the request literally and wrote the same sentence more legibly. It was re-written a third time with even larger letters. A final message read: "They are gone. Why don't you let me go please?"

This was the last recorded account of any sitting.

COMMENTARY

A number of factors went into the demise of the Bindelof Society. There was the general feeling that soon after the early sessions in 1934 contact with Dr. Bindelof became more erratic and the phenomena more unpredictable. By the sitting of January 13th, Marianne Meader had joined the group. She was a very attractive young woman who soon became the focus of interest among several members of the group, particularly Len. As he reflected on it in later life, he felt she diverted his libido from the sittings. I attended only one or two of the January sittings, if at all, preoccupied as I was with getting the marks needed to get into medical school. Larry began to go with a girl he later married. Both he and Gil as well as Len were becoming more aware of the need to find work and earn money.

In the final section I will try to deal with two of the questions that I am sure have come up in the mind of the reader, namely, the identity of Dr.

Bindelof and the question of fraud. And finally, I will describe the lifelong impact this youthful exceptional experience had on all our lives.

Part IV. The Bindelof Story as Shared Exceptional Human Experience

OVERVIEW OF OUR LONGITUDINAL, SHARED EHE

In retrospect, compressing the experiences we boys shared together as I have done in this monograph would make it seem more like a shared delusion fulfilling the needs of a group of adolescent youngsters for an all-powerful and benevolent father than an encounter with something so mysterious that it had a profound and lasting effect on our lives—one that created a bond of friendship and trust in each other that has endured over the ensuing seven decades.

Those of us who still lived in New York City (i.e., Gil, Len, Larry, George, and Tom) joined me in an abortive attempt to sit again in 1946. In addition, we met for a day of mutual reminiscence and retrospective evaluation of our shared experiences in 1966 and again in 1969 and 1971. Each one will be described below. At the present writing there are four survivors: Gil, Larry, Howard, and myself, and we have kept in contact over the years.

SOURCES USED IN COMPILING THIS SECTION

Primary source material included the photographs, the written messages, and the accounts written at the time referred to in the earlier parts. Sources for this part include:

1. Notes taken of the 1946 sessions.
2. An account I wrote in 1946.
3. Transcripts of the taping of the reunions held in 1966, 1969, and 1971.
4. Howard's account written in 1966.
5. Summary of a taping of Len in 1976.
6. Transcript of a taping of an account by Len in 1985.
7. Transcript of a taping of Tom in 1972.
8. Informal discussions with Gil and Howard held in 1993 and 1994.
9. Communications from Helen Lauer [Len's daughter], Judy Malamud [Len's step-daughter], Rachel Lauer [Len's wife], and Tom Lauer [Len's son].

THE CORE GROUP REVISTED

Had we embarked upon a shared delusional experience or had we come upon something genuine that could only be described as an unknown force

The Bindelof Sitter Group

that connected in some mysterious way to the emotional field generated by the interplay of our personalities? Our neediness, our excitement, and our enthusiasm had kept us dedicated to and involved in the sittings for almost two years. Perhaps no final or informed judgment can ever be made about the nature of the "force" that came into being, but the one thing we all agreed upon and kept agreeing upon for over seven decades was that it was real, unexplainable, and intimately connected to who we were and the cohesive effort we sustained for so long.

It might be helpful to the reader at this point to be more revealing about ourselves, our personalities, and our interaction both at the time of the occurrence of the phenomena and also as adults when the series of reunions occurred. As I am the one in the group who undertook to write this account, it will inevitably reflect my own bias. Despite this, and to the extent that I can, I will use direct quotes from the participants themselves. They have been altered only to smooth the transition from spoken to written language.

Who We Were at the Time of the Sittings

The following recollections were gathered from transcripts taken at the 1971 reunion.

Gil re Monte: "You were remote because I didn't even know you personally."

Gil [referring to himself and Larry]: "We were crazy kids and we saw each other continually."

Gil: "I wasn't involved in any intense emotional attitudes. I was very close to Leonard. About George—I don't know. I mean I didn't know him too well."

Len re Gil: "My impression of you in those days was of a guy overlaid with talent, with an artistic gift in almost any goddamn thing you touched. . . you could have played any musical instrument if it were given to you. . . you could draw. . . you had more sensitivity plus a helluva lot of creativity even in other areas."

Len re George: "I saw George as somebody less gifted, more plodding, more willing to make the effort to accomplish something where you [Gil] wouldn't make the effort."

Gil re Larry: "I thought Larry was a great actor and that he had a personality. . . I thought he was the funniest guy in the world. . . he had a great talent for the theater and [was] very musical. He was an actor by nature and that's one of the reasons I was attracted to him."

Gil re Len: "Len was a brilliant guy and I always admired [his] intelligence and [his] brain and the things [he] could do. . . there are synergistics that bring people together. You don't become close to people who don't intrigue you emotionally."

Gil re Monte: "As far as Monte my relationship was very objective and impersonal."

Gil re Tom: "With Tom there was a very impersonal relationship."

Larry re Gil: "I must have been awfully demanding . . . to me you and Olga [Gil's mother] were the center of my universe."

Gil: "I guess I was seeking something. I was a loner . . . you know I was an only child except for the deep emotional connection to my mother. I was reaching out for other people. Whenever I found anybody that was warm and responded the way I did, I latched onto him."

George: "I was a loner. I never had a close friend before I met Gil."

Larry re Gil: "I felt Gil was a very multitalented person, not just artistically, not just in terms of music, but intellectually. He was very bright and very stimulating. We had what was a very rare rapport. . . . Gil was someone I loved as much as I was capable of loving anybody at that time because I think what I had started to do was to protect myself against the hurt at home I had received at the hands of my relatives."

Larry re Len: "I always admired what I considered his superior intellect. He used to go around holding his pipe, talking about Beethoven and the Ninth Symphony being Beethoven's expression of man's relationship to the cosmos. . . . I was very jealous of your [Len's] relationship with Gil."

Larry re Monte: "I was very fond of Monte . . . many Saturday nights [after the séances and midnight snacks at a cafeteria] we would walk home and we would talk."

Larry re Howard: "Howard always struck me as being nervous, as he is today. He could never sit still."

Larry re Tom: "Tom I never really liked because I thought he was such a phony. He lied constantly and he was unreliable, and also, I guess I was jealous because Dr. Bindelof showed such a great deal of interest in him. . . ."

Monte re Len [Jeff]: "Now Jeff, as a person, had a powerful influence on me. He was very bright . . . he always seemed very sure of himself. . . ."

Monte re Gil: "There was this prima donna or impulsivity about him that intrigued me because I was much more inhibited. . . . I envied his level of development as far as music . . . the theater . . . art. And his mysterious link to psychic phenomena. It made you a very mysterious guy."

Monte re Howard: "I liked Howard. Someone mentioned Howard being difficult to reach."

Monte re Tom: "Tom had a sharper tongue. He could let you have it with both barrels for no reason at all. . . . He was intriguing. He was in complete revolt against everything. I was tremendously impressed with his reading of T. S. Eliot. He [had] a fantastically resonant voice. . . . what fascinated me about Tom was he was somebody who was living out the fantasies all of us had."

Len re Gil: "I think the most important person to me was Gil. We shared all kinds of interests. . . . It was very positive, very affectionate. . . . He had a lot of things I felt I didn't have—talent in the arts and music and an inventive and creative flare."

Larry re Len: "At times there was a feeling of jealousy on two levels."

One, when you became spokesman . . . what you did to wrest a piece of control . . . and on another level I think I resented the increasing intimacy and attention that you guys [Gil and Len] spent with each other."

Len re George: "I don't remember George making an impression on the group as a personality either in the social aspect of our interaction to the degree that many of the others of us did because of our need to dominate or our need to clown."

Len re Howard: "He was the guy I was most aware of as [having] a moat or big wall around him which he defended valiantly. . . . He was certainly amongst the brightest of us."

Len re Tom: "Newman was an important guy in my life . . . because of the things Newman had to offer. There were a lot of things about him that were hard to like . . . his compulsive fabrications and exaggerations. Some of his rebellion I found distasteful in the sense that it seemed almost ostentatious."

Tom re the others: (from interview, January 11, 1972) "Ellie was lovely. Gilbert was trying to make believe he wasn't the medium—it was really Larry. Jeff was a tower of strength and beauty. I loved him right away. You [M.U.] were a nice boy. George was a nice boy, obviously going to be a salesman. Larry was like somebody from the inquisition trying to find out what heresies you might have in your secret mind. He really wasn't secure then. Now he's very secure."

In 1966, after our first reunion, a letter Tom wrote to me included the following capsule impressions he had at the time: "Lennie still loves the multi-syllabic verbiage; Gil is still the self-doubting, witty, self-deprecating youth; George still the childish, unsure, indefinite person" (December 3, 1966).

In Part I gave a brief account of the way I saw my fellow Bindelofians then and subsequently. In brief, my reactions to the others were as follows: I have come to know Gil much better in recent years than I did at the time of the sittings. My own remembrance of him then jibes with much of what the others reported. He had a special aura for me because of his personal and intimate knowledge of psychic phenomena through his mother Olga's earlier experiences and her continued interest. I didn't feel close to him at the time but did admire his ready wit and his broad knowledge and ability.

I had a special feeling of closeness to and admiration of Len that went back to our days in high school together. I envied him for the things he had that I felt I lacked—good looks, self-assurance, and a charismatic quality that made him a natural leader. I felt a deep sense of loss at his death in 1988.

Larry was a natural performer. I enjoyed his ready wit, his antics during our breaks between sittings and there were moments of intimacy on our walks home from the sittings. He could be abrasive and caustic at times.

I also knew Howard from grade school on. Although we never were close there was a self-effacing quiet honesty about him.

I didn't have a clear recollection of George at the time of our sittings. I didn't know what to make of Tom at the time. He was so different from anyone I had ever known. He was in open rebellion against authority, he had a superior air, and a strong resonant voice that could deliver lines of poetry as if he had written them.

In general, I was excited about participating and content to follow the pace set by Len, Gil, and Larry.

FRAUD, SELF-DECEPTION, COLLUSION?

To repeat what my purpose has been in setting forth this account: It was to have on record a shared set of exceptional human experiences. I am well aware of the fact that for anyone who was not there at the time it may seem too fantastic to believe. The question of belief is not the point. What is important is that it was experienced as real for those of us who experienced it, and it had a lasting effect on those of us who were part of it. Nevertheless, I would like to share with you, not in a spirit of proof, for I readily admit no scientific proof is possible at this late date, but some of the specific events and certain aspects of the total experience seemed utterly beyond our individual or shared ability to produce. As Ellie [Gil's aunt who was at many of the sittings] commented in an interview in 1985: "You were very clever boys. But to produce what you did would have had to be very, very clever. Besides, no one person could have done it. There would have had to be a conspiracy."

And, I might add, a conspiracy that would have required being continued among the members of the core group over the ensuing decades [over seven decades for Gil, Larry, Howard, and me, and for Len until his death in 1988] and despite a growing closeness and deeper knowledge of each other.

Comments From the 1971 Reunion on the Issue of Fraud

Gil: "If you had three or four people conspiring together I'd say you could do it very easily. . . . I don't think one person could have done it."

Gil [referring to being felt by fingers in response to the request for materialization]: "I think we had simultaneous contact . . . there were three or four people saying 'He's touching me,' and you'd have to work collectively to produce this."

Larry: "As far as motivation there was no fraud over this passage of years. Nobody benefited from it in any way."

Howard [from his 1966 account]: "The nature of the sitters, their youth, enthusiasm, earnestness mixed with exuberance, curiosity and bravado, hopeless confusion and ignorance, lack of guile—all these made it repugnant to suspect a calculated, continued fraud."

Horace [in a letter written October 25, 1968]: "As far as I could tell the

The Bindelof Sitter Group

events were not false, and if they were, they showed a remarkable persistence over several years."

From the Account of M. U. in 1946

The intervening years have taught me something of the caution and care necessary in evaluating results. I can state unequivocally, however, that I have never been able to convince myself that any member of our group had either the talent or the motivation to accomplish and maintain by fraudulent means the great variety of phenomena that was obtained. This [is] despite my naiveté when I first embarked on the adventure. In short, I am as convinced now as I was then of the genuineness of what we witnessed. In fact, my conviction has been strengthened by further knowledge and experience in the field of psychic research.

There were a number of specific features and happenings that are particularly difficult to account for on the basis of deception or unconscious collusion.

1. The photography experiments were carefully monitored by more than one person from the time of purchase to the development of the plates. In one of our very first experiments with the hand of one of the sitters resting on the metal container holding the film, my thumb slipped over the hand and appeared on the film as I witnessed its development (see Part II) indicating it couldn't have been prepared in advance.

2. The successive and very rapidly written messages in response to spontaneous questions from the group and that were asked at different times in a single session could not have been prepared in advance (described on p. 60. See also pp. 86–87 for Bindelof's explanation).

3. Written messages came in response to thought questions put to Dr. Bindelof.

4. My distinct and lasting impression is of a bridge table moving about the room so fast it was hard to keep up with it (see Part II).

5. Several strange events occurred in the course of the healing efforts. On one occasion when Dr. Bindelof attempted to treat Tom's near-sightedness, Tom felt pressure from fingers inside the orbit of his eye (Newman taped interview, 1972). In a letter dated July 25, 1995, Larry described his recollection of a similar incident.

The night I had a toothache during a sitting Dr. Bindelof's fingers probed my mouth and teeth. After a few seconds I felt his hand slap my face. A written message following this chided me for neglecting proper tooth care. Since that time I have spent much time and money in dentist chairs and am pleased at still having my original teeth more or less intact.

At another healing session Howard, in an informal talk with me in 1994, [reported having] had a vivid recall of where he was sitting at a time when Dr. Bindelof was massaging his eyes to relieve a headache.

Incidentally, as to possible fraud at the time of the sitting, I was in such a position [with my back to a corner where there was a piano] that it would have been impossible—not impossible—but certainly none of the sitters would have been in a position to do it.

In the final analysis, my conviction rests on my knowledge of the people who went through this experience with me and who joined me in exploring the meaning for and impact on their lives in the ensuing years.

DR. BINDELOF: WHO? WHAT? WHEN?

When we met for the reunions beginning in 1966, one of the things that was disturbingly apparent was how little factual information we had about Dr. Bindelof. We weren't sure of his nationality—German, Austrian, Russian, American? We recalled different years for the date of his death—1919, 1921, 1929. We knew nothing about his personal life other than the fact that he was a doctor and that his interest in healing continued after his death.

His personality was that of a benevolent but firm father figure, acknowledging our efforts to maintain contact with him while at other times showing his impatience when one or another of us failed to show up or failed to follow his advice. He expressed his eagerness to be of help to us and to demonstrate his ability to heal any symptoms we or our parents called to his attention [only Len's and Horace's mothers took him up on this, relieving insomnia in the former and gastrointestinal symptoms in the latter].

Was Dr. Bindelof a discarnate entity? Larry was the only one who took Dr. Bindelof at his word and still does. Several of us, including myself, felt that he was for real at the time. Len was skeptical and quick to point out incongruities in some of his medical references. With the exception of Larry, our retrospective view of Dr. Bindelof was that he represented a collective projective response to our needs for a father figure. This in no way accounts for or diminishes the mysteriousness and the significance of the phenomena we witnessed.

Len was the first to discern gaps in Dr. Bindelof's medical knowledge—errors that even a physician practicing in the 19th century would not have made. The most obvious was a reference in one of the written messages to "retina muscles," which in reality do not exist. There were other suggestions of medical ignorance that came through in the written messages. These included the assumption that myopia was a curable defect that could be ameliorated by massaging the eyeballs and that nerves could regenerate (at the time it was held that they could not, although this is not as absolute in the light of recent knowledge). A point was made about Dr. Bindelof's

frequent spelling errors, but there may be ways other than denying the discarnate hypothesis to account for that.

Here are some reflections about Dr. Bindelof culled from the various accounts:

At a talk to the research staff at the Maimonides Medical Center in 1973, Gilbert indicated he did not regard Dr. Bindelof as a disembodied spirit. In interviews in 1989 and 1993, he referred to Dr. Bindelof as a conglomerate, a mysterious composite of adolescent yearnings. This didn't preclude his personal belief in life after death.

At the 1971 reunion Leonard said: "I don't think that at any time Bindelof said anything or wrote anything that wasn't within the mental ability of any member of the group or any combination of the group." At a talk in 1976 he referred to Dr. Bindelof as dull, crotchety, and patronizing. He regarded him as a synthesis created in response to the wish on all our parts for a benign and fatherly figure. At the 1971 reunion Len further stated:

I believe that Bindelof was a synthesis, that the phenomena we've been discussing was a product of the psychic capacity of human beings, generally classified as paranormal, and that the intense interest, involvement, and relative compatibility of some or all of the members of the group helped develop, with a certain amount of practice, a relatively high degree of physical force and a relatively high level of personality or intelligent structure that we came to call Bindelof. The notion that Bindelof was actually an intelligence that once lived and died is not a hypothesis I hold.

In his 1934 account it was obvious Larry accepted Dr. Bindelof as a truly deceased entity, a physician still strongly motivated to share his remarkable healing powers. His adolescent awe and admiration came through in this account written at a time when the sittings were still going on:

Here is a man, such as there have been few since or before Christ. At his life he strived and worked, all in one direction, to cure. He loved his work, as a mother loves his baby. He has nothing to gain, nothing, and still he wants to cure the people who spurned his helpfulness when he lived.

In the 1971 reunion Larry maintained his belief in the reality of Dr. Bindelof and still looked upon him as a father surrogate. He was impressed with the interest Dr. Bindelof took in him. "He was more interested in [in the condition of] my teeth than my father was." Larry's convictions about Dr. Bindelof's postmortem existence continued to the present day.

In the 1972 interview Tom didn't believe we had been in contact with a deceased spirit. With regard to Dr. Bindelof, he said:

That's the way G^od would have imagined him, a typical, strong 19th-century German. In later life I can't figure out what the hell Bindelof was all about. I'm more or less inclined to take him at face value. I just have strong feeling it was Gilbert's personality. I could easily see where he would choose such a projection.

Howard, as I indicated, was highly skeptical of Dr. Bindelof as an actual entity, but not of the phenomena we generated.

I know I was more in Larry's corner than in Len's at the time in the sense that I knew Len was probably right but I was hoping he was wrong. I had found the father image I was looking for and was loathe to let him go.

THE INTERIM (1934-1966)

Following my departure from the group at the end of 1933 or early 1934, I had no further contact with any of the group until 1946. Gil and Howard kept in touch with each other and with Larry. I don't think Len kept in touch with anyone except perhaps his cousin George. We each followed our individual career paths outlined in Part I.

One of the first things I did on returning from military service overseas was to visit the American Society for Psychical Research in the autumn of 1945. I had the good fortune of encountering Gardner Murphy on that visit, and before I knew it I was sharing with him the Bindelof experience in its entirety. Those of you who may have known Gardner know his capacity for giving a young person an empathic and respectful audience.

Once in practice [psychiatry] in 1946, I attempted to locate Len but didn't succeed until that summer. Len and Gil had grown apart. That also might have been the case with Len and me if I had not taken the initiative in contacting him. He was a very self-sufficient kind of guy. We felt happy about coming together again. The years of medical school, internship, residencies in neurology and psychiatry, and finally, the army years were not very congenial to uncloseting the Bindelof experience. The field of parapsychology was just in its infancy at that time and was not receiving a very warm welcome from the scientific establishment.

It was not long before Len and I began planning on a get-together with whomever was available to see if we could get any results if we resumed the sittings. We did succeed in contacting Tom and Larry, and the four of us held a seance at my office on October 2, 1946 and then again on October 9th. Gil and George joined us on November 21st and then George again [alone] the following week. Between October 2, 1946 and February 27, 1947 we had a total of about six sessions. We sat around a rectangular table in my office in the dark with our hands in contact resting lightly on the table. The window was blanketed and the room was in total darkness. My notes about these sittings were very fragmentary. No unequivocal results were obtained. Gardner Murphy sat with us on February 6, 1947. A tuning fork that was standing upright in the middle of the table fell over while the table seemed absolutely still. Not very convincing!

The general consensus was that nothing had happened that carried with it the definiteness and impressiveness of our earlier results. What these sessions did was to bring us together again and rekindle the shared feelings of 13 years earlier. It also set the stage for our later reunions beginning in

1966. In the interim my friendship with Len deepened. I corresponded with and had occasional visits with Larry who had moved to California. I corresponded with Tom until 1949 and then lost track of him. I didn't see George again, nor did I have much contact with Gil and Howard until the first reunion. I succeeded in locating Tom shortly before the 1971 reunion and taped an interview with him on the West Coast in 1972. He was in the last stages of metastatic cancer and died within a year.

MY REFLECTIONS ON THE REUNIONS (1966, 1969, 1971)

It would be hard to convey the excitement [and] the mix of fun and seriousness that characterized our first reunion on July 31, 1966 at my home in Ardsley, NY. We came to life in a way that denied the intervening years and that was not much different from the way we related to each other at the time the events were actually occurring—boisterous, wisecracking, taking shots at each other, and in general, relishing the shared specialness of our earlier experience.²⁴ I was working full-time at the Maimonides Medical Center at the time and managed to get a small grant from the Jack Aron Foundation to defray the expenses of those who participated. Our stated goal was to review all the extant records, check against each other's recall of the events, try to fill in gaps, resolve any discrepancies, and note those aspects of the experience that made it so credible to each of us. As might be expected, the effect of the passage of time on our collective memory was such that very little was added that had not already been offered in the existing accounts from earlier times. Gil, Larry, Len, Howard, and George attended. We continued along the same lines when we next met on November 22, 1969. Our final reunion occurred on May 15, 1971. Howard did not attend the last two. Larry had succeeded some time before this last meeting in contacting Tom on the West Coast and arranged for him to call at our 1971 meeting. Tom was quite ill at the time. He did keep his word, and we each had a chance to speak to him. The phone call unleashed a flood of feelings at each end of the line.

All three reunions were taped and subsequently transcribed. It came to a total of 322 typewritten pages.

George died not too long after our last [group] meeting in 1971.

I continued trying to salvage further information [from individual] meetings with Gil and Howard in New York and in discussions with Larry on his occasional trips to New York. I have gotten to know Howard a bit better and have spent many delightful days with Gil and his wife, Marion.

My interview with Tom took place in 1972, several months before he died.

²⁴The general feeling was we had lost whatever there was in our collective state that generated the earlier results. These sessions, however, brought us together and paved the way for the later reunions.

THE BINDELOF EXPERIENCE AND ITS LIFE IMPACT

Although it is the most important aspect of this account, this section poses special difficulties. Len, Tom, and George are no longer with us. I had lost track of George's wife and had no knowledge of how the experience affected his life other than his enthusiastic participation in the reunions and his conviction that we had produced genuine psychic phenomena. In the case of Len, my own personal knowledge of his life was augmented by the accounts of his daughter Helen, [his] stepdaughter Judith Malamud, his wife Rachel Lauer, and his son Tom. Gil, Larry, and Howard were asked to submit their own version of the meaning of the experience. To my mind, Leonard experienced the phenomena as deeply and as forcefully as I did, and although it didn't shape his professional career, it was obvious to me that just as in my case, when he joined me in coming back to it after the long hiatus, his excitement and feelings about it were just as strong as ever. In spite of his protestations (see his comments pp. 101-104), I believe the experience remained very much a part of Gil's life. He kept coming back to the subject of psychic phenomena in his writings, including one book (Roller, 1975).

Tom (Interview January 11, 1972, Los Angeles)

Relying on my interview, the report of an interview he had with Larry, and the feelings that came out in his call to us at the time of the 1971 reunion, it was obvious that an unforgettable part of his past had come to life. Even though he was desperately ill at the time his memory of detail was remarkable. The same old feelings of excitement and wonder were there, including the memory of his being scolded by Dr. Bindelof for his misdeeds. In his own words here is his answer to my question of life impact shortly before he died:

And the main impact was that here I know about the existence of certain miracles and everybody would think I was crazy if I mentioned it. And then I was concerned about what was reality and unreality. What was the projection of Dr. Bindelof? But I wouldn't say it had any strong impact on my life except [for] maybe some people I met like Jeff. It just happened at that time you know—when I'd have more impact looking at a Montmartre sunset than anything else. But it was a gorgeous thing to do each week. In New York there always used to be trouble wondering what to do and that filled in time fine. Then we spent all night talking in the cafeteria.

Tom what I gathered in the interview, Tom had led a very checkered existence. After an abortive literary career [he had one story published in the *New Yorker*], he drifted about, ending up in Mexico exporting marijuana and, according to what he told me, at one time running guns.

The Bindelof Sitter Group

Howard (1988, 1994)

In an account prepared in 1988, Howard told how he came into the group through his friendship with Len:

As I was a Marxist then, although I had never read a line of his I was naturally a materialist.

What was my reaction? I remember it well. So it is true, after all, that there are non-material forces in the universe, and secondly, "What of it?" It never affected my own personal philosophy in all these years and I know as little now as I did then about the nature of psychic phenomena.

But, I was magically reminded of a group of fellows who were instant companions, some of them, those who survived to this day. We were, take my word for it, witty, sophisticated, even brilliant.

On one occasion in 1994 I asked Howard if there was more he could say about the impact of this experience on his life. He demurred at first, saying he had put all he had to say in his earlier accounts (1966, 1988). When pressed, he offered this enigmatic comment: "It could mean everything or nothing." By that I presume he meant that the choice was to let it fade into insignificance or to face a reality that was too overwhelming to contemplate.

Larry (1994)

Although Larry offered only a short account when asked about the impact, I think it is fair to say that his acceptance of Dr. Bindelof as a beneficent discarnate entity resulted in a transformative experience that was more manifestly a part of his life than it was for any of the rest of us. Here is what he wrote in 1994 in response to my inquiry:

Ever since we received the first message identifying the writer as "Dr. Bindelof" I believed he had lived on this planet. I still believe that.

During the ensuing 60 plus years I have felt Dr. Bindelof's presence in my life. Obviously I cannot "prove" it—but I believe it and have tried to live accordingly.

I believe, as he wrote in one of his messages, that we could not comprehend life after death until we experience it—and that experience is not too far away.

Finally, I believe the Bindelof experience was the most important in my life.

Gilbert (1993, 1994)

Since all the successful séances we had read about in the classical literature of psychical research had required a medium, we simply assumed that Gilbert, with his history of poltergeist and through the influence of his mother, immersion in things psychic like the Ouija board, from childhood

on, had more mediumistic power than the rest of us. I don't think he particularly appreciated the honor. He never went into a trance nor did he ever act any differently than the rest of us. But things did happen in his adult years that suggested we were right. He told me of one such incident during a talk we had on December 23, 1993. During the mid-eighties he had held a seance at his country home with about 12 of his neighbors. They sat around a huge table with their hands resting on the table in semidarkness, when suddenly the center board of the table separated and rose several inches off the table. There was much screaming and yelling when this happened, bringing the sitting to a sudden end. Gil's wife Marion described it as spectacular.

In an interview on April 15, 1993, when questioned specifically about the impact of the Bindelof experience, Gilbert said:

It didn't change my life. It had no impact. I had accepted it as a natural phenomena [*sic*]. Olga took it for granted and so did I. It was simply part of what remains mysterious and unknown. I didn't become a disciple of Dr. Bindelof as Larry did. It was part of nature yet to be discovered.

In letters to me written in 1993 and 1994 he wrote more about the impact, or rather, lack of impact:

Coming from a mother who took paranormal phenomena as entirely normal, I was never surprised by this kind of stuff. Poltergeist was something all little boys had. I was bothered more by its destructiveness than that it was not entirely usual. Furniture moving about and other substantial physical demonstrations were infrequent and odd but then so was Hamlet's ghost. My cherished Lionel [train] engine was torn apart. I was shot in the ass with hairpins. Hieroglyphics inscribed on our walls advised us to "go."

So you see, I'm what remains of this little tike who spent his early childhood living with these phantasms of the occult. Therefore, you might say, like Minerva, I was born fully armed and prepared for all this stuff.

Since the phenomena we developed are a matter of record it remains only for me to state my gut feeling about what it all means. I can't accept Bindelof as an incorporeal entity but rather as the conglomerate product of a bunch of semi-hysterical adolescents looking for a daddy. Be that as it may. [For Larry, Bindelof is an icon - M. U.] So be it. To each his own. Reality has no place in the occult. As I've told and written you [M. U.] many times, the only thing I'm certain of is survival of the personality. How-why-where, I haven't the vaguest. I believe there can be fragile, tenuous crossovers, reaching beyond physical dimensions as we understand them. I've experienced this. Lore abounds in such things but being what we are and where we are makes the acceptance of its reality difficult. The Bindelof experience has not affected my metaphysical beliefs. In retrospect, I'd say it's an affirmation of what I've always felt.

As to the charge of fraud—euphemistically, young pranksters—this hangs over the entire experience. However, I don't think this invalidates what happened. Almost all psychic phenomena have been attacked on this score. The strongest argument against fraud was our devotion to the sacrament

Saturday nights for two years to the exclusion of the more usual screwing around.

Gil's Update (Interview November 14, 1994)

So now we jump another thirty years. I'm moving through an interesting, rational life with my good wife, Marion. Bindelof is a dim memory as are those who comprised the group except you [M. U.] and Howard, of course. Some, it seems, have died. Meanwhile, Gil Guerrico Roller Frederico²⁵ has on and off dabbled in the occult and gotten results—oak tables opening in the middle with the lily leaf coming out, apparent telerotation of stones—all signifying nothing other than lots of middle-aged women becoming hysterical. I have developed a theory that if a sufficiently concentrated hysteria can be developed among a group of angst laden women and men, too, for that matter, paranormal physical phenomena will occur. I call it the Tristan and Isolde syndrome. How's that for a book? Meanwhile, I have acquired a distaste for experimentation in the occult. I feel it is an unwelcome intrusion into provinces which at this time of our experience, are not of our business.

It is now the 1990s. I have gone from film production to writing—sold one book. I find very little or no influence of psychic phenomena upon my life other than as a background source of information. I am writing about the Elberfeld Horses and see Kluge [Clever] Hans²⁶ (Pfungst, 1907/1911) as a metaphor for the stupidity of psychologists and people generally and the imminent demise of our morose civilization. This is all, brilliantly, brought together to show how man is the victim of his hubristic God/Man mythology—the belief in which his final demise as a rational animal is ineluctably orchestrated and the real horses asses are not on horses. Animals are far more psychic than any of us.

I must confess—that what has happened in the realm of the occult has left its mark on my psyche, but only as a resource rather than a part of my spiritual construct. That is to say, my views on life, death and the mysteries that these dimensions must hold for us have not been inculcated by the Bindelof experiences. I think they're genetic, instinctive, and part of a cosmic concept that may be called religious. It is a secret knowledge and perception given to some of us for reasons I have yet to understand.

For Gilbert, it seems the Bindelof experience was just another event on a path he had set upon earlier. He had his own convictions about survival before and subsequent to the experience. He found it every bit as exciting as the rest of us but never reacted with the same wonder and awe. This concern with the "psychic" remained a part of his life and continued to gain expression. He gave a course on "Paramechanics" at the New School for Social Research in 1971. His book, *A Voice From Beyond*, dealt with Sir William Crookes's investigation of the mediumship of Florence Cook and

²⁵ Here he was referring to his original forenames. Gil was born in Argentina.

²⁶ Reference to Clever Hans, a horse that could tap out with his hoof answers to complex mathematical problems under conditions that presumably ruled out sensory cuing but upon more careful investigation did not.

was published in 1975. He participated with Leonard and myself in a presentation of the Bindelof experience to my research staff at the Maimonides Medical Center in 1973.

Leonard/Jeff (1971)

Although Len and I grew closer after the 1946–1947 meetings and had many talks about the Bindelof experience, he died before I had the chance to have him develop in depth what he considered to be its impact on his life. The only time that he himself touched on this was in the 1971 reunion.

One of the things that happened, I think, as a result of these experiences [was that it] opened me up. Somebody . . . referred to me as a guy who was very sure of the way things were, as very sure of myself. I think the first opening wedge into that fortress of certainty was my experience with psychic phenomena . . . when Gil reported about it . . . I was willing to try but I didn't expect to find anything. I don't think I was aware of it at the time, but I think it was really an opening wedge in this business of being sure . . . [of] the way things are. Now at 55, I think I've reached some point where I can now feel comfortable with uncertainty, and for me that's a major step forward. So, if it was important, it was a big opening wedge in this attitude that there is such a thing as positive information; there is such a thing as "truth." It was important, like a first giant step in a significant personal development. . . . It hasn't influenced my life style particularly, but as I say, it was a piece of philosophical epistemological advance.

Len's death was a deep personal loss to me as well as an end to my hope of his collaboration in this account. There isn't much I can add to his own assessment of its life impact except to say he did enjoy talking about it and sharing the wonder of it on the few occasions he did [so] publicly. We gave a joint account of it at the 1971 annual meeting of the Humanistic Psychology Association. He also gave informal talks at the Maimonides Medical Center and the Institute for General Semantics. His keen recall of detail as well as his ability to be both objective and dramatic at the same time in his presentation intrigued his listeners.

What follows are the responses of his wife Rachael Lauer with whom he was close until his death, his daughter Helen Lauer, and his step-daughter Judy Malamud.

Rachael Lauer [Leonard's/Jeff's Wife]

In my judgment Jeff's extraordinary magnetism and charisma helped create the phenomena. Those same characteristics have greatly affected his relationships with me, you, and many others. It's very, very hard to separate the phenomena, Jeff, and ripple effects. . . . Jeff himself rarely talked about it, or wondered about it, or pursued any books looking for explanations. He just went around being himself, stirring up excitement, mesmerizing people,

creating strong reactions wherever he went, even in his last years. (Letter from R. L. to M. U., April, 1994)

Jeff was sure you guys created the experience. It was your cumulative powers, adolescent energies combined. He seemed satisfied with that interpretation and let it go at that. . . . Jeff lived out his life as a mechanic . . . his creativeness apparently saved for his later years as an inventive engineer. I'm into supra-conscious education. There was that evening a few years after his death . . . when he appeared to me in my living room—to say he was all right and to wish me well.²⁷ If I created that phenomenon then I would say that Jeff's story made me receptive to such an experience. If he created it, then perhaps it was a further expression of his own magnetism or his ability to break through planes and boundaries, an ability that never seemed to impress or concern him nearly as much as it did you. He never really acknowledged he had any such ability—though he said he strongly suspected Gil had. (Letter from R. L. to M. U., July 18, 1995)

Helen Lauer [Leonard's/Jeff's Daughter]

The life-long implications of any of Jeff Lauer's experiences are not an easy subject for me to address [as] I was not very close to Jeff. But his earliest telling to me of the Bindelof Society—when I was 7 or 8—was one of our closest moments. The fatherly presentation of the Bindelof facts, both as anomalous, jestworthy amusement and as profoundly significant truth, was a centerpiece in the legacy of reality Jeff gave to me, quite purposefully, and solemnly, and intimately. I have learned from my father—through his telling and retelling—that plain, brute reality as given and unadorned is awesomely mysterious and worthy of the respect other parents may insist their children reserve for some institutionalized authority.

I think that the basis of Jeff's humanism and compassion, and the impetus for his virulently independent thinking politically, is this core of humbling respect for the unknown that the Bindelof encounter may have given him, and which he unquestionably taught to me.

The kind of esoteric mysticism that attracted him with enthusiasm was the debunking, irreverent approach that quelled spiritual pretense and dogma. This was a down-to-earth, extremely macho, intensely critical kind of guy telling you about written messages with no writer present—you believed him. There was no reason nor basis for supposing that such a person would be privy to sensationalism nor leave himself open to being duped. Emotionally withdrawn maybe but never duped. (Letter from H. L. to M. U., August 1993)

Judy Malamud [Leonard's/Jeff's Step-daughter]

What was the impact on Jeff of his adolescent experience of joining with friends in a deep, prolonged exploration of reality's outer limits, of partic-

²⁷ A reference to an account of a strange but realistic vision of Leonard/Jeff appearing near her in her living room and then fading.

ipating so tangibly and convincingly, at such a young age, in "otherworldly" happenings? Jeff was a good storyteller and enjoyed sharing with me and other family members his lifelong fascination with these phenomena. He encouraged my predilections, even giving me a Ouija board for Christmas when I was twelve. He seemed most impressed by the psychokinetic effects—the table tapping, levitations, thought photographs, and materializations—and less interested in the concept or particulars of communication with a "disincarnate entity." Although it was clear that he had given some thought to the physical, interpersonal, and intrapsychic underpinnings of these events, he was not at all inclined to transpersonal or spiritualistic interpretations and seemed satisfied with the explanation that "Dr. Bindelof was merely a product of the boys' subconscious minds. As far as I could tell, Jeff's scientific/materialistic world view was not fundamentally shaken, but his life was forever enriched." (Letter from J. M. to M. U., July 12, 1995)

In a note from Jeff's son Tom (June 26, 1995) he spoke of how Jeff's personality with his combination of openness and skepticism impacted his [Tom's] life.

Personal Impact

The impact of the Bindelof experience on my life was as profoundly transformative for me as it was for Larry, but in a very different way. For Larry it was an encounter with a disincarnate entity whose benevolent presence was with him for the rest of his life. Larry still carries a picture of Bindelof in his wallet and he attributes the prevention of some near catastrophes in his life to Dr. Bindelof's intervention. For me it was the beginning of a journey of exploration into the many ways these strange events lumped together as the paranormal, impinged upon our lives. That journey, early on, pursued in secret, took many twists and turns but ultimately played a decisive role in every professional move I made in the course of my career. It began in 1932 after reading, at Len's urging, Hudson's (1893/1970) book, *The Law of Psychic Phenomena*. Fired by his description of the powers of hypnosis, I succeeded in inducing a trance in my 13-year-old sister the first time I tried. Placing a penny at room temperature on her wrist and telling her it was red hot, she withdrew her hand in pain and in a short time a localized area of redness appeared where the penny had been. I did a number of other silly experiments, including getting her drunk on a glass of water, all of which bolstered my 16 year old self-image at her expense. The fact that a circumscribed skin change could be induced psychologically made a lasting impression on me, resulting in a series of circumstances that led me to my first serious research project (Hillman, 1959, 1960).

Driven by the curiosity these experiences generated, I could map out the entire future course my life took as a search for a way of giving meaning to these earlier adolescent experiences. It led to the pilot work with the REM-monitoring technique to study dream telepathy and later to the more

formal experiments in dream telepathy at the Maimonides Medical Center. It shaped my 1970 sabbatical where, in Moscow and Leningrad, I witnessed the striking psychokinetic effects of Nina Kulagina and to my later and still current pursuit of the paranormal dream in dream-sharing groups. Finally it led to the rekindling of the flame of the Bindelof experience, first in the 1940s and then in the three reunions beginning in 1966 and to the inner urge to preserve that experience in print.

In short, as a consequence of these earlier experiences, I found myself embarking upon a dual career, one in psychiatry and one in parapsychology. Had it not been for my early encounter with psychic phenomena I'm not sure I would have been as open as I was to the occurrence of telepathic dreams of patients undergoing psychoanalysis, nor would I have been tempted to pursue the study of the paranormal dream at the Maimonides Medical Center.

When I was at the receiving end of a dream from a patient that contained specific, noninferable information about my life that he or she could have no possible way of knowing, I knew that some complex transference field effect was going on. I was able to conjecture about psychological factors at play but was at a complete loss as to how that way of toying with the ordinary concepts of space, time, and energy transfer could occur. Accepting the reality of these events opened my imagination to the implication of such happenings for our understanding of psychopathology in general and of schizophrenia in particular. More than that, it played into a growing area of interest to me, namely, the nature of dreaming consciousness. We knew that dreams connected with the three dimensions in which we live, the biological, the psychological, and the social, but here was evidence that they went beyond this to a transpersonal realm. My writings about dreams took a turn from physiological theory and clinical observations to a concern with larger issues such as the way dreams served survival needs by at times transcending the categories of space and time that so determine our behavior while awake. There was nothing paranormal about the paranormal dream. It was simply a manifestation of the fact that though the content of dreams start with issues of immediate and recognizable significance to us, they don't necessarily stop there. If deep-seated survival needs are at stake they can bridge space telepathically to bring us information available but not currently known to us or bridge time and precognitively incorporate elements of the future not currently known to anyone.

Rhea White has written eloquently and in depth of the dissonance that pursued her throughout her brilliant and outstanding career in parapsychology. When she finally disengaged herself from the procrustean bed in which an army of talented and dedicated workers tried for so long to fit psychic phenomena in the effort to win scientific acceptance, it was an act of liberation, not only for herself, but also for those of us who feel that the panoply of psychic phenomena will never come into its own in the sanitized experimenter-subject model.

I responded enthusiastically to the more open, more human, more

interesting idea of exploring under one umbrella the range of exceptional human experiences. More specifically, it struck me as the best container for the Bindelof experience. I had not proof—but, more importantly, I didn't have to have proof. All I had to have was as honest a recall as I and the others could manage, helped by the earlier documentation, and a lifetime of the participants knowing and trusting each other.

In most of the EHEs that I have read about the transformative effect was brought about by a sudden peremptory experience. In my case it was different. The triggering experience went on for almost two years and the transformative impact rippled out over my subsequent life. It was in a sense a chronic EHE in its onset and in its transformative effect, which ran a chronic course over the ensuing seven decades. It made its presence felt with each of the mysteries I encountered as my work and interests drew me to the paranormal, hypnosis, dreams, and aspects of psychopathology, in particular the psychological content of the major psychoses. In each of these instances the Bindelof experience helped me eschew many of the conventional explanations in favor of a greater appreciation of the depth of our ignorance about the nature of reality.

In preparing this account I have come to more fully realize how pervasive was the impact of these earlier experiences on me throughout the course of my life. Getting it down on paper was a task I knew I had to do. Now that it's done, I have a feeling of relief, a feeling of sadness that Jeff wasn't here to work with me on it, and a deep sense of gratitude to Rhea White for her recent writings that finally inspired me to get going with it.

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