

You remember it well? Probably, you don't

Your earliest memory: clutching your mother's hand on the first day of school. Or spilling chocolate ice cream all over your best party outfit.

Vivid as they seem, most early memories are not autobiographical truths at all, according to University of Michigan psychologist Martin Mayman. Rather they are important fantasies which express the way a person feels about himself and his relationships with others.

"Early memories are selected — unconsciously — to conform with ingrained images of one's own character structure," Prof. Mayman explains. "Thus, one may sift through the stories a person tells about himself and extract the interpersonal themes which define a person's self-image and his enduring expectations of others."

Most early memory formation probably follows much the same course, the U-M psychologist says, from hearing or thinking about an event, to visualizing it in one's mind's eye, and finally to investing that image with a feeling of actuality and "immediacy" that makes it seem real.

"Once that last step is taken, it is difficult for

most people to believe subsequently that their own early memories really derive from stories, images or fantasies as much as they do from real experiences."

volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of the Volunteer Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly listings of volunteer opportunities. Further information about these and other volunteer needs at more than 200 agencies may be obtained by calling the Bureau at 642-7272. Any non-profit organization needing volunteer assistance may also call the Bureau.

SUMMER-PROGRAM SUPERVISORS — A knowledge of sports activities, as well as arts and crafts combined with a liking of children from all backgrounds are the qualifications needed to be a summer-program supervisor for the Boniface Community Action Corporation in Detroit. Volunteers age 21 or older are asked to commit afternoons for 10 weeks for this role as supervisor or assistant supervisor.

FAMILY AIDES — Family Focus in Birmingham has openings for family aides to work as a "friend" to a family. Volunteers will share homemaking and child-rearing tasks as well as provide information about resources available. Persons age 21 and older are asked to commit to four hours per week for at least eight months. Extensive training starts shortly.

ACTIVITIES AIDE — You can have a good time while getting to know older individuals as an activities aide at the Hilton Convalescent Home in Ferndale. Volunteers age 18 and older who are able to commit three hours per week can become involved in visiting patients, conducting activity programs and transporting patients.

FOR MAYMAN, a teacher, psychotherapist and a director of the U-M's Psychological Clinic, early memories can provide a screen on which to project present-day psychological experiences.

Mayman will be honored for his nearly four decades of research and teaching in clinical diagnosis and such projective techniques as the Rorschach ink blot test at the 1981 annual meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA) this August. He will receive the Distinguished Contribution Award from the Society for Personality Assessment.

Mayman was president of the Society in 1966-67. Early memories almost always occur as a scene one imagines visually, Mayman notes. "In more than half of all early memories, the person sees himself as a little child as if he, the child, were a separate person and he, the observer, were looking on from some point away from the center of action. Often the scene is viewed from above or from outside a window looking in."

"SURELY THE SCENE" was never experienced that way in actuality. The memory is a reconstruction of a real or a fantasized event rather than the re-experiencing of a living event. From the way the person describing the memory often looks down on the event, we can see that he visualizes the scene as it would seem to him at an older age, or even as an adult."

Mayman uses a wide range of tests to produce insights as to how a client approaches problems and he attempts to solve them. "It doesn't matter so much whether the memory being described is happy, embarrassing or painful. What matters is the range of feelings and emotions that the person has access to and the maturity of his interpersonal relationships as depicted in the 'early memory' event."

"If we were to state our case in the extreme," Mayman says, "we would describe all early memories not as factual reports but personal myths — as inventions which may have little or no relevance to actual events but great relevance to the way a person now experiences current events."



graphology

Lorene Green

Writer likes structured life

Dear Lorene:

I follow your columns in every issue of our local paper and have enjoyed it tremendously. Never having written any type of fan letter before, I was hesitant until my curiosity took over to find out what you would read in my handwriting. I am 55 years of age and left handed.

M.T. — Garden City

Dear M.T.:

The total picture of your handwriting suggests a very traditional person. Your desire for approval is strong. How others perceive you seems to concern you very much. The emphasis you place in conforming to the standards of the social group to which you belong is revealed in your copy book style of writing with slavish retracing of every t and d stem.

Responsibilities are handled with care and conscientiousness. You are

...a real local paper...

...remotely... flower... tips of fan letter... until my curiosity...

dependable and not full of surprises. The ability to plan ahead and to organize seems apparent. Things just do not happen by accident, but are the result of this aptitude.

Your mind is logical. You do not rely on intuition but depend on logic and facts for your answers (shape of m's and n's and all letters connected). A structured life is what you are most comfortable with. Handling the unexpected can be unsettling. You strive to be neat and orderly in all that you do. Clutter and confusion would soon get to you.

You do not rush into new experiences and situations. Apparently you find it more comfortable to remain with the tried and true than to reach out and broaden your horizons.

Your personal growth is often limited by not always being receptive to new ideas. You tend to have set opinions that are difficult for you to change (combination of narrow upper loops and closed e's combined with total style of writing).

To behave in a spontaneous, lively manner is not natural for you. There appears to be a certain timorousness about you. It seems that you have possibly been under the domination of someone with a stronger will than your own.

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