

## CHAT ROOM

JONI HUBRED

## A love story that evolved over 40 years

The yellowed, fragile news clipping pressed in my mother's Bible probably didn't mean as much to her when she put it there as when she found it years later.

Forty-five years ago, Jack was just the boy who delivered milk and cream to her grandmother's house, where she'd grown up since being orphaned before she was 8 years old. Whenever a hometown boy went to war—even a police action like the one raging through Korea in the 1950s—the paper wrote up something nice.

Vietnam hadn't happened yet. No one would look at his picture and wonder whether he'd killed any babies that day.

For reasons lost in the river of time, Mom clipped the small story and tucked it away somewhere safe. She doesn't recall ever thinking, "Some day, I'm going to marry this man," even though that's how things turned out.

Love's funny that way.

## Stood up

His first mistake, of course, was standing her up. Friends had arranged a blind date and when he didn't arrive, she tracked him down to the dancehall where he was standing with all the rest of the lone wolves.

I've often wondered about that moment when he turned and looked into her eyes. She was almost his height, maybe an inch shorter—the whitest of white skin, coal black hair, broad cheekbones and blue eyes that almost disappeared when she laughed.

His slicked, dark hair crowned a long, narrow face with ears and a nose large enough to be teased about occasionally. His eyes, too, were blue. A little more pale than hers, perhaps. Did they fall in love at first sight? Did they both just know they'd spend the next 43 years together?

Or did he simply take her hand and lead her to the dance floor, thinking only about the audacity of this woman who dogged his trail, and of her beauty?

I'll never know now. I wish I'd have thought to ask before it was too late. I wish I'd have done a lot of things before it was too late.

On the occasion of their 40th wedding anniversary, I asked about the secret to their long and mostly happy marriage. In typical fashion, Mom answered and Dad agreed. Not that he didn't have a mind of his own. It was more that he was thoughtful and a little shy, and she always said it best.

An children, both my parents lost their parents, though not the same way. Mom's father died of Bright's disease and her mother of cancer. Her grandmother, three older sisters and, by all accounts, most of her hometown helped raise her.

Dad's parents divorced, his father burrowing into an alcoholic existence at the family farm and his mother going to work at a time when women struggled even more to earn a living wage. A teenager at the time, Dad moved in with another family and did chores in exchange for his room and board.

Neither one of them grew up with a family, at least not like the ones in the movies.

"That's the one thing we agreed on," Mom told me. "We both wanted a family."

Lots of people get married for that reason. Being a couple, having children, it's all part of the American dream. Still, more than 50 percent of all marriages in this country fail. But as Will Rogers once remarked, "The only way to stop divorce is to stop marriage."

So why did this marriage—the bedrock of my life and that of my siblings—last right up until 7 a.m. on Feb. 16, 1998, when my mother touched my father's shoulder and felt his very last breath?

I believe it's because they always

## Helping kids get social

■ This social skills group helps kids connect with their peers.

BY KATHIE O'DONOHUE  
SPECIAL WRITER

As Greg became more withdrawn, his mother, Carol, grew concerned. Having always had difficulty with peer relationships, the 17-year-old seemed to not want to interact with anyone, becoming a loner. Then Carol found a social skills group at Davis Counseling Center in Farmington Hills and both their lives changed.

"The group has been wonderful. Greg just didn't have the skills to interact with others. He was comfortable. He had no friends. Though he had worked in individual sessions with a therapist in the past, what he seemed to need was direction in relating to others. The group definitely provides that," said Carol.

Clinical social worker Ken Johnson, who heads up several such groups at Davis, emphasizes that "the group doesn't have a sickness concept. It's supportive and nurturing. That's why kids are willing participants. The kids I work with are nice, not deeply disturbed, but kids who have problems with relationships. I look at what we're doing as helping kids improve functioning."

Though the groups aren't formally called social skills groups, people looking for such services refer to them that way. There aren't many such groups around, and one of Johnson's clients commutes from Michigan's Thumb area. At Davis, Johnson runs six groups that meet weekly and several other therapists at the center run similar groups. Clients range from ages 6 to 20, and groups are composed rough-



Running a session: Ken Johnson heads up several social skills groups at Davis Counseling Center in Farmington Hills.

ly of those in the same age and developmental level. Each is limited to six members. Sessions run an hour and a half. Boys and girls are usually balanced evenly. Each group sets weekly goals.

Referrals are made by school guidance counselors, other therapists and word-of-mouth from parents.

"Difficulty can range from someone who's very shy, passive and insecure to somebody who is pretty assertive and kind of a know-it-all in terms of how they deal with other kids," said Johnson, who refers to his clients as "my kids."

"I've had a number of kids who have ADD, but this is not specifically a group for ADD kids. I see some kids who are high achieving, very gifted. I have others in special education. There is quite a range."

Typical things in a group include passive withdrawal behavior to assertive acting out.

"Little self-direction in terms of homework, things around the house,

projecting onto other people: 'It's my brother's fault,' or 'I've got a dumb teacher.' We identify with everybody in the group."

## Helping each other

A member who has a hard time making friends might describe an experience of approaching someone new for a play date. Other members would encourage her to have an activity or purpose in mind—watching a movie or playing Nintendo—and might offer advice such as making sure she lets her friend pick some of the things to do.

"What my groups are not appropriate for are drug involvement, sexual acting out, delinquency," said Johnson. "That would not mix; my kids are vulnerable."

Johnson adds "The purpose is to modify how people communicate and interact with others, to get kids interacting in a positive way. My belief is that we function in certain ways, at least in part based on what our experi-

ences have been. People that have been in relationships that have not been pleasant ... that can get to perpetuate itself."

"If somebody is passive, they feel what they have to say is not important. The more they back off, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that they don't speak. Then there's something a little different about how they interact. People don't welcome them and they don't engage them the same way. That pattern becomes real important."

As his clients gain self awareness and confidence, Johnson describes the result as having a ripple effect, hopefully moving outward with noticeable improvement at home, in school and around the neighborhood. In groups, kids are given the opportunity to begin to think differently about themselves, and it is at this point that interactions can be changed.

"In the group, I see the interaction. I see the kid who comes on strong."

Johnson describes a recent session

Please See THERAPY, B2

## She brings anorexia out of the closet



Duo: Leslie and her mom, Lori Reinbold, faced Leslie's anorexia together.

## How to help a friend

If you're worried about a friend's eating behaviors, here's some advice from an organization called Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention.

Talk to your friend about specific things that have made you worry. Share specific times when you felt uneasy because of her eating rituals.

Do this in a non-confrontational way. Use "I" statements. For example: "I'm concerned about you because you refuse to eat breakfast or lunch. It makes me afraid to hear you vomiting."

Avoid accusatory "you" statements. For example: "You have to eat something! You must be crazy!"

Avoid giving simple solutions. "If you'd just stop, everything would be fine."

If your friend has become obsessed with eating, exercising or dieting, she

probably needs professional help. Your friend may be angry that you are calling her on her attitudes and behaviors. She may deny that there is a problem.

If your friend won't listen to you, you may need to tell someone else. Consider talking to her parents, a teacher, a doctor, a counselor, a nutritionist, or any trusted adult. She needs as much support as possible from the people in her life.

You can't force someone to seek help, change their habits or adjust their attitudes. You'll make progress in sharing your concerns, and knowing where to go for more information.

People struggling with anorexia, bulimia or binge eating disorders need professional help. For more information, contact Eating Disorders and Awareness at (1-800) 931-2237.

BY MARY RODRIGUE  
STAFF WRITER  
[maryrod@econline.com](mailto:maryrod@econline.com)

When Leslie Reinbold became involved in the Miss America pageant program, her mom, Lori, worried that it might trigger the eating disorder she had battled since adolescence.

But when Reinbold, 20, was crowned Miss Farmington last July, the event was a watershed. Each contestant must adopt a social issue for her platform. Reinbold chose anorexia, the disorder that she once kept tucked so deep inside her, even her mother didn't know she suffered from it.

Over the past several months, as she prepares to compete in the Miss Michigan pageant in June, Reinbold has become a poster child for eating disorders. She has shared her story in the media, and Friday night she hosted a free seminar in the William Costick Activities Center eating disorders. Speakers that have battled anorexia and bulimia, as well as a therapist who works with clients with eating disorders, shared the forum.

## Diverse audience

The event drew parents of children with eating disorders, some with their daughters in tow, to a dietitian hoping to learn more, to the boyfriend of an anorexic who wanted to better understand the disorder.

"My goal is for everyone here to come away with at least one new piece of information," Reinbold said before introducing her fellow panelists. At the end of the emotional two-and-a-half-hour session, she asked if anyone hadn't learned something fresh. Not a single hand was raised.

Guest speakers were Tina Mahoney, director of operations, and Susan D'Angelo, a therapist and director of Christian services, for edFREE.com, an interactive support program providing support for individuals suffering from eating disorders. The organization is based in California and the women paid their own expenses to participate in the Farmington Hills forum.

Also joining the group was a volunteer with the Farmington after-school youth program who battles anorexia. She, Reinbold, and Mahoney offered

their personal stories in painful detail. Reinbold, in tears, acknowledged it was the first time she was discussing her eating disorder with her mom present.

"It began when I was 12," she said. "I didn't want to grow up. It was a cover for me, a way to let my body not develop."

It was also a time when her parents were going through a divorce and she was moving from a small school to a much larger one. High school was awful. She didn't want to eat in front of anyone.

"At senior prom, I didn't think I was thin enough. I sat in the corner and cried all night."

## Bizarre behavior

Meanwhile, her mom had to deal with her bizarre behavior. One Thanksgiving, Lori Reinbold remembers coming home from a family dinner. She couldn't find Leslie anywhere. Leslie was in her room's bedroom frantically exercising.

"I thought losing weight represented being perfect," Leslie remembered.

After several years of therapy, which she continues today, Reinbold "is at the point where I can help other people. I don't think anyone else in the Miss America program has eating disorders as her platform. I'm happier with my life now."

The Michigan State University journalism major is at a healthy weight now. Her mom noted that "she ate a real Thanksgiving dinner at her boyfriend's house last November. Even pumpkin pie."

Mahoney, 26, had praise for the parents in attendance.

"My parents don't want to understand. And two of my three sisters are also bulimic."

She, too, talked about the strive for perfection. An all-A student in school, popular, active, "bulimia was my way of screaming at the world. My natural reaction to things outside my control was to throw up or hurt myself—pull my hair or scratch my arms."

Abuse of alcohol, sex and drugs followed.

"I was trying to numb my heart out. I was in so much pain," she said.

Please See ANOREXIA, B3