

Produced by and for people with Asperger syndrome

Asperger *united*

Edition 24 Autumn 2000

Employment success

Vania Lawrence has been working in the post room at The National Autistic Society since the start of May 2000. She obtained her post with the help of The NAS Prospects Employment Service. She loves her work and thought that her story would give encouragement to everyone worried about work.

Vania Lawrence has Asperger syndrome and is also partially sighted. This has not stopped her from earning a portfolio of qualifications that anyone would be proud of and using them to get herself a position working in the post room here at The NAS.

Vania's work is complicated and of great importance to The NAS because communication with the outside world starts and finishes with her. She opens all the post, including the many donations. All the post has to be carefully sorted to make sure that it goes to the right person. That is not as easy as it sounds because lots of NAS post is not addressed to a particular department. To further complicate matters, there are two lots of post to deal with every day and Vania deals with parcels as well as the letters. All donations must be carefully logged into a special ledger with lots of details, sometimes up to £5,000 worth in just one day. This means that her work also involves book-keeping. Vania deals with some out-going post as well, which involves using the franking machine.



Vania got the job at The NAS with the help of Prospects, an employment service, operating in London, Glasgow,

“ I had 5 interviews before I got the job at the NAS but Penny helped me stay positive ”

and shortly Sheffield to help people with autism and Asperger syndrome find work.

"Penny Deakin at Prospects was great," says Vania. "She gave me training in job seeking, and getting me on to the Internet. She had me filling in two or three application forms a day and chased up the companies I applied to, telling them: 'Vania is not as disabled as you think!'"

"I had 5 interviews before I got the job at The NAS but Penny helped me stay positive. Antony Lipski from Prospects also supported me when I had my interview at The NAS. The NAS were great as well and let me know they were taking me less than 24 hours after the interview."

...Continued on page 12 (back page)



If you would like to know more about
Prospects Employment
Consultancy why not call them on
020 7704 7450





Asperger United is a self-help newsletter run by and for people with Asperger syndrome. The newsletter aims to put people with the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

Asperger United is produced by an editorial group consisting of:

Editor John Joyce

Additional support from The National Autistic Society's Publications Department

Please send all correspondence and subscription requests to

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Thank you to George Cox who kindly produced the illustrations included in the Pen Pal Network section.

Thank you to Graeme Lawson for producing the 'AU' logo.

Please note that the views expressed in Asperger United are not necessarily those of the Editors, The National Autistic Society or those involved in the publication of the newsletter.

By Ben R Good

I walk out into the warm euphoric night
On my own again (not euphoric)
I see the joyful couples walking hand in hand
some younger than me,
some looking at me like I'm nothing.

I have no one to chat to, to share my absorbing thoughts
so I sing to myself to stop me going crazy
It's like I have a sign upon my back
That says don't talk to me - I bite (I don't really!)

I wasn't a bad person, I didn't hurt anyone
But somehow people treat me like I'm a joke
I'm not laughing, I'm lonely here
There's no good punch lines on your own

I stop at a park bench, dark and damp and quiet
I sit down and wish someone wanted me, am I that repulsive I ask myself?
Then suddenly out of the darkness I hear a reply
It says, "You're not a bad person, just a person in a world full of people who are missing something
Missing the friendship you could offer them"

I get up to leave
To go home and sleep alone
Suddenly I turn to the voice and ask it
"Are you watching over me - are you interested?"
I feel a sense of expectation and hopefulness
A cold wind blows and my reply blows into the air
It says - "I'm not watching you - I'm watching someone much more desirable down the road"

I shrug my shoulders as I arrive home
I'm greeted by a voice that moans "you have a low self esteem that's your problem Ben?"
I reply to the discourteous voice - "And why do you think that is?"

I just smile to myself as I snuggle up into bed
Because I know that the world can take away my self esteem but I still love myself
I may not be a woman's fancy
But I like what I see
Because I've never hurt anybody
And that's the way I'll be

Ben Good
August 2000

Welcome to the latest issue of your newsletter. I hope that you have all enjoyed your holiday, as I have.

May I begin by welcoming Annie Cooper, our new contact at The NAS, and also by hoping that we will make AU even more successful – but that depends on you, our readers.

Heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to this edition and encouragement to all who have not previously contributed.

It appears that the great county of Yorkshire has come to life this time. Yorkshire readers, please do not think that you were dead before but I have received much material from your region this time.

Those of you with access to the Web will be glad to know there are many Asperger sites.

Now to readers those whose first language is not English:

- Merci beaucoup (French)
- Danke schoen (Deutsch)
- Gracias (Espanol)
- Dank u wel (Nederlands)
- Grazie (Italiano)
- Djiekeye (Polski)
- Obrigado (Portuguese)
- Go ra maith agul (Gaelic)
- To da (Hebrew)
- Spaseeba (Russian)
- Dekuji (Czech)
- Shukran (Arabic)

Best wishes from your editor

John Joyce

Contributions needed for the next edition of Asperger United

Asperger United will be published again this year. Please send in any stories, articles, poems, pen pal requests and letters.

Contribute to your newsletter

We are always looking for new ideas and stories to fill the pages of the newsletter. We would like to hear any news, receive articles about yourselves, see your artwork and read your poems and short stories. If you can email us your articles we would be very grateful, see below for the address.

Send all contributions to:

Asperger United
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Fax: 020 7903 3767
Email: asp.utd@nas.org.uk

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Debbie Hudson and her Asperger syndrome

My name is Debbie Hudson and I am 37 years old. I live with my parents in Glenfield, Leicester. I have two sisters, one younger and one older.

I was diagnosed with AS when I was 35. Before I was diagnosed, things had been very difficult. I was bullied at school, college and work.

My Mum and I were very relieved when I was finally diagnosed. Mum always knew right from birth that something was not right with me. She always thought that I might have autism.

Before I was diagnosed, things had been very difficult

Since being diagnosed my life has totally changed for the better. I am involved with my local Autistic Society and support them in various ways. I go along to the Asperger Parent Support Group, I am on the committee of the Leicestershire Autistic Society, I do clerical work for the Befriending Scheme, and I raise money for the society by making cross stitch cards and knitted dolls.

I do not have a paid job as I am finding it difficult to get one. I am however doing voluntary work at Environ, a recycling and nature company helping them with data inputting. I also do my father's administration from time to time.

I am also a committed Christian and attend Leicester Christian Fellowship. My faith has made a huge difference.

Debbie also writes about her holiday experiences

Holidays were easy while I was a child. My parents took me to lovely places, abroad and in this country and I did not have any worries about getting lost because I was always with them.

As an adult, I have had to depend on my parents to take me away because I cannot go to unfamiliar places. I would panic and get upset. If it were not for them, I would never go away.

I have been on holidays without my Mum and Dad, but have had some bad experiences. I have often been left on my own and not included in anything when going away with the church.

I went on a holiday three years ago and it was a disaster. The girl I was sharing with was disabled herself and she was not keen on going to many places. Also I was not invited to go along with some of the others. I was very unhappy. I had not been diagnosed then and, to be fair to the church, they were not aware of my difficulties. The worst of it was that I was unable to tell them.

I have almost sorted my holiday problems now. I started to take part in OASIS which in an on-line support forum on the internet for people with AS. I posted in my holiday difficulties and a nice young woman who had a son with AS replied and invited me to go and stay with her for a few days. She and her partner also came to Leicester to visit me. I have managed to find out about the National Express buses and have found it pretty straight-forward. She and her family live in Cleethorpes and there is a bus that goes from Leicester right to Cleethorpes with no change.

I also went to stay with some friends in Cardiff, Wales three years ago. It was a great success as I went on the National Express. I had to change once, but it was so straight forward, so I did not have any problems. My friends met me off the bus at the other end.

I feel that this is the answer to my holiday problems. I would never be able to drive to these places, so if I gather an army of friends and use the National Express and if my friends meet me off the bus and later put me back on the bus to go home, it will be fine.

Dear Debbie

Thank you for these contributions. Just what we would like to hear from our readers. Hope you can continue to send us some information, especially any new holiday experiences you may have and any way you develop your interests.

Before I knew about Asperger syndrome, I had spent a night in Barcelona, had thought of leaving, even booked a ticket, but missed the train. I had nowhere to stay so I was wandering in the great public square called La Rambla when I was approached by two persons, also "visitors" to the city.

To cut a long story short, they robbed me of all but the clothes I was wearing and had to spend a week sorting out financial and travel arrangements to come home.

Even though that happened to me I continue to travel unaccompanied.

Best wishes and hope to hear from you again!

*John Joyce,
Editor*

Martin Pilkington writes on his holiday experiences

As my mother is of Swiss origin, I have often visited Switzerland and therefore would like to tell you a little bit about this interesting small country in the centre of Europe.

Switzerland was founded on August 1st 1291 by three men on a meadow called "Ruetli". To this day the 1st August is a national holiday in Switzerland, when the whole country celebrates this important date in history with candle-lit processions and fireworks. During my last holiday I visited the "Ruetli" by boat on the Lake of Lucerne.

Luzern, to give the town its local spelling, is surrounded by mountains and stands alongside the magnificent Lake Lucerne. It is visited by tourists from all over the world. It is famous for the Chapel Bridge, the Old Town dominated by the medieval Musegg Towers, the many beautiful churches and its landmark, Mount Pilatus.

In February carnival is celebrated for two weeks with long processions in Luzern and people come from all over Switzerland and abroad to witness this spectacle. During the summer the world-famous music festival takes place.

At the Ballenberg Open Air Museum in nearby Brienz one can see 90 different chalets and houses from Switzerland all together on one site.

Switzerland is unique because four different languages are spoken. In the parts bordering on to Germany and Austria they speak a German dialect, in the west bordering on to France they speak French and in the south, surrounded by Italy, they speak Italian. In a small area in the mountains the fourth language "Romantsch" is spoken.

I love Switzerland and hope to return soon to see many more nice places.

Martin Pilkington,
Newark

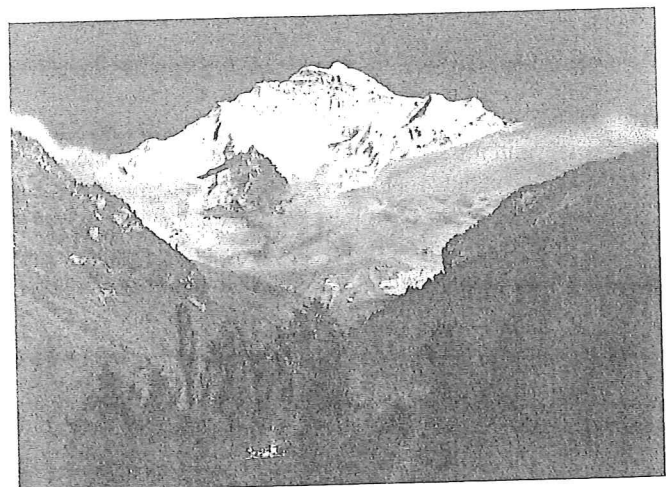
Thank you for the article, mein freund Martin. I too am a bit of a traveller and visited Lourdes in South West France this summer. I have yet to visit Switzerland but I'm planning to get there eventually.

John Joyce
Editor

Oxford Learning Disability NHS Trust

We are currently conducting a study of dedicated clinical services in the UK (NHS or otherwise) for adults with Asperger syndrome. These services may be part of a wider service for others with developmental disorders or for people with autism. They may provide diagnosis, cognitive therapy, psychiatric advice, or inpatient treatment. If you currently provide a designated service for clients with the syndrome or know of a group which is successfully doing so, we would be grateful to hear from you; we shall, of course, share the results of our findings.

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Mountain near Luzern,
Switzerland



Asperger syndrome as seen on TV

Dear *Asperger United*

I was very interested to read George Handley's letter about the Asperger character in *Holby City* (issue 22 Summer 2000). This reminded me of the first time I saw Asperger syndrome portrayed in a TV drama. I well remember seeing an episode of *Taggart* in Autumn 1992 (that Asperger syndrome CD-ROM-like memory of mine strikes again!) in which there was a man with Asperger syndrome (seven years before I was diagnosed with it myself), but, in the description of the Asperger character's behaviour, I also heard one of the best descriptions of what it's like to live with Asperger's – 'He doesn't know the rules'.

I'm certainly well aware of the impact TV dramas can have on spreading a wider awareness of psychological 'conditions' (for want of a better word). Every time, for instance, I talk about Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (which I haven't got!), the other person says 'O yeah! Did you see that bloke in *Casualty* who couldn't stop washing his hands?'

Other readers might, like myself, be aware of the Asperger-like traits often to be found in fictional TV characters. Gordon Brittas, Mr Bean and Data spring to mind (if not my mind, then certainly those of Tony Attwood and Temple Grandin). Professor Digby Tantam, who gave me my own diagnosis of Asperger syndrome, meanwhile, agreed with me that Kenneth Widmerpool, the arch-villain in *A Dance to the Music of Time* (serialised by C4 in the Autumn of 1997) almost certainly has Asperger syndrome.

No, incidentally, I don't like being compared with an arch-villain! In fact, I dislike Widmerpool generally. When I see, however, how like him I was when I was younger (particularly as a teenager – a difficult enough time even for those without Asperger's!), I can have a good laugh at myself, and see how far I've come in my social skills, and how much more genial I've become generally (not to mention incredibly modest!)

I can, however, think of at least one fictional hero with Asperger-like traits – Inspector Morse. Clues? The reclusive tendencies, the special interests (Morse's fascination with the life of Thomas Hardy even fits the interest in particular individuals common to so many Aspies, myself included), the grammatical pedantry and general fascination with language, the solace he finds (like many other Aspies, again myself included) in music.

Yours sincerely,
Richard Briand

Lack of understanding

Dear Editor,

My name is Kevin Phillips and on Wednesday 31 May 2000 I was diagnosed by Professor Digby Tantam as having Asperger syndrome. Where I live the levels of understanding of AS are terrible. When I tell people I have got it the overwhelming reaction is ... 'Er What's that?' or 'Never heard of it!' or after telling them what it is 'You haven't got that! It's all in your mind, you are imagining things!!!'

What I want to do is set up a social club where I live for people with autism or Asperger syndrome. I know that they are out there and I want to establish somewhere for them to go on

“What I want to
do is set up a
social club
for people with
autism or AS”

an evening and meet up with other people who have this condition. I am sick of travelling or having to travel to Sheffield and Doncaster and the likes to meet people who have AS or Autism.

What I also find disturbing is that there are people walking around out there who have these conditions and don't know that they have it and their behaviour is being condemned and punished like mine has been most of my life. When a person with autism does something like have a temper tantrum the popular response is 'What s/he needs is a kick up the backside' whereas a backward person smashes up a room the response is 'Well we can't expect anything else, s/he's got the mind of a SEVEN year old!' or a 'normal' person does it and the response is 'We must find out why he is doing this!'

Anyway I am grateful that a publication such as *Asperger United* exists and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely
Kevin Phillip

Thank you for your letter. Nice to hear from a newly diagnosed person. Please forward your psycho-history and we will see what we can do about publishing it. A reader from Rotherham named David Miedzaniek was hoping to start a local group but I have heard nothing from him for some time.
John Joyce, Editor



How to reply to Pen Pals

- Please remember to let us know the full name (including surname) of the person who your letter is for.
- To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to *Asperger United*, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.
- We will pass your letter onto the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.

Stuart, Scotland

I am 31 years old. I feel isolated and find meeting people and getting to know them difficult. I find that the herd instinct of most people makes us 'free spirits' feel all the worse. How can we help other isolated people like ourselves? I would love to hear from you if you have any constructive suggestions or just want some interesting discussion. My interests include comedy, radio broadcasting, philosophy, sociology, technology, postcards, games and feeding the ducks.

Tim Loder, London

We have an informal "all lads" social night out, and drink at the pub every Saturday night, meeting from 9pm. Venue: *Head of Steam* pub next to Euston railway, underground and bus stations, conveniently central, near London's West End. All 'Aspies' welcome. Socially appropriate behaviour essential.

Desperately seeking Kevin

Is your name Kevin?
Or have you ever gone on television using the name "Kevin"?
Matthew of Redditch wants to get in touch with "Kevin" who appeared on the 999 television programme a few years ago. He remembers a few things about you:

- you were desperate until you discovered you had Asperger syndrome
- your father was a church minister
- a member of the church congregation appeared on the programme
- your family had connections with Plymouth.

If these names sound like you, send your details to *Asperger United* and we can put you in touch with Matthew.

Adrian Summersell, Nottingham

Adrian is 21 years old and would like to hear from anyone, especially if you share his interest in collecting autographs of star celebrities, ten pin bowling, animals or cooking.

Kevin Phillips, Rotherham

I am 24 years old. I would also like to have a pen-friend or establish correspondence with someone who also has Asperger syndrome. I have an IQ of 135 and I like reading, listening to music, the weather, walking, swimming and various other activities.

David, York

I'd like to hear from anyone at all! I promise to reply to all letters.



Richard Briand's University Challenge

I was very interested to read about the Open University in the last edition of *Asperger United*. I would imagine that, for many people with Asperger's, it could avoid a lot of problems and stress. Living with other students in either halls of residence or shared houses is difficult enough for people without Asperger syndrome. If my own experience is anything to go by, it can be much more difficult for Aspies (to use a term invented by Liane Holliday-Willey). It was severe depression and a near-nervous breakdown after being severely bullied by someone three doors up in my postgraduate halls of residence that set me on the road to my own diagnosis early last year.

Then again, apart from the bad times (an absolute nightmare at the time), I did have some extremely good times, and made some really good friends, through living in halls of residence and a shared house. In the case of the shared house, it was friendship through adversity, when my ex-housemate friend and I found we had a shared sense of humour in mocking the foibles of the two other housemates (one of them having been the original Slob from Hell!). Now we're out of it, we can laugh at how awful things (and the other two housemates) were.

I also know that I'd have been extremely unhappy going to University while living with my parents (though, with tuition fees, this is now an option dictated to many students regardless of whether they like it or not). I needed to stretch my wings and escape the nest. Two clichés in one sentence – you can tell I studied Politics! Now I've done that, my parents have treated me as more of an adult – or even more as an adult, they really weren't that bad before I went – since I came back from University.

As Liane Holliday-Willey says in her excellent account of her own life with *Asperger syndrome, Pretending to be Normal* (available for £12.95 code NAS115 from St John Supplies

Tel: 020 7278 7888. PO Box 707B Friend Street, London, EC1V 7NE), there are many things University has to offer people with Asperger syndrome. The opportunity to study a special interest is the most obvious one.

As I've mentioned previously, my first degree was in Politics (my MA having been in US History & Politics). I felt really lucky to be studying what was, in effect, my hobby. I was baffled by the people on my course who weren't interested (Of all the subjects to read when you're not interested, politics is one of the worst; you can never do too much reading about it, given how things can change so quickly). Still, when they left me alone, and tolerated my own fanatical interest with a certain amount of amused tolerance or even affectionate amusement, I didn't feel too bad about it. I also learnt to use my sense of humour to combat any perceptions of me as being too swotty or serious, particularly if people think you want to be a politician, a profession about as popular as cockroaches!

Another thing I found ironic as I studied politics was the number of politicians with Asperger-like traits. Richard Nixon, J Enoch Powell, Lord Rosebery, Senator Robert Taft. No doubt it's just coincidence that the ones in which I was really interested, and read most about – President Nixon and J Enoch Powell – had the most pronounced Asperger-like characteristics! I was less amazed by the number of writers with Asperger-like traits (of which more later), when to be a writer, a desire for solitude (at the very least, a tolerance of it) is logical (maybe even essential). How ironic, though, that politics, a profession which (theoretically at least), demands above all of its practitioners gregariousness, ease with other people, and less than literal-minded truth (to say the least) should attract so many people for whom socialising and forming relationships is so difficult.

University also helped me develop my style of writing (once, that was, I'd got over the habit of referencing everything which gets drilled into one as an undergraduate). This has proved really helpful to me. When I have since started a career as a freelance writer. I have already had one article published in *Parliamentary Brief* on President Clinton's policy towards Northern Ireland, and I have just had another accepted for the publication by *About Larkin*, the journal of the Philip Larkin Society.

Philip Larkin, his life as well as his poetry, has long interested me. Even before I had any ideas that I'd got Asperger syndrome, Larkin's own Asperger-like characteristics were ones with which I could identify and sympathise. I'm thinking of his desire for solitude, his diffidence in social relationships, his special interests (especially the obsession with jazz music, in his writings where he shows the 'self appointed seeker of truth' characteristics displayed by many Aspies), his fascination with (and old-fashioned pedantry in) language, and most of all, (and which shines through in the poetry), the wry sense of humour and sharply developed sense of life's absurdities often found in people with Asperger syndrome.

I mentioned Larkin's Asperger-like traits in a correspondence with Tony Attwood recently. Apart from being very interested when he himself graduated from Hull University (where Larkin was Chief Librarian at the time), he also mentioned a number of other writers with Asperger characteristics. Apart from A S Byatt and Iris Murdoch (names I've seen in connection with Asperger syndrome before), he suggested that Shakespeare might have had Asperger syndrome.

There must be many stories and experiences about University which other readers have. In the meantime, I hope you've enjoyed reading mine.

The Nottingham Asperger syndrome social group

I wish to tell readers about our progress in this group. I hope that readers will respond with their own views and thoughts on how we could improve or diversify.

We meet once a fortnight and engage in games, listen to music and plan activities. We try to avoid discussing Asperger syndrome.

Several group members can be thoughtless to each other. Recently we discussed appropriate behaviour when on holiday abroad. Some of us go on and on about the weather and end up annoying the people we meet. At other times our behaviour shocks people and we break social rules such as inviting ourselves out with a group. One thing is certain though: very few people sympathise with the Asperger case and we are often seen as badly behaved and disruptive, just like Alan Partridge – manipulative too and outspoken.

George,
Nottingham Group

On being ordinary

After having just read my first *Asperger United* newsletter I have many questions for other readers. Most articles printed were positive from people who seemed independent, educated who appear to live effortlessly easy lives. Without wishing to offend, it made me wonder if like me there are others out in the community who are not high fliers, teachers professors, nuclear scientists exceptionally gifted artists etc.

While all these people are in there own right inspirational in achievement are there no lifelong strugglers?

Having continuously battled with my differences for the whole of the 33 years of my life, every day is still like facing Everest from the base up to the peak! I have run away from so much of everyday life for so long, avoided so many social situations simply because I am still so afraid.

I have absolute respect for all the others who seem to have gone so far with their lives. Pretending to be like everyone else has taken its toll over the years. The proof is in my decline in mental health, depression, psychiatrist visits, counselling, suicidal feelings: I am exhausted.

Idea anyone, for the struggler simply to cope with everyday life would be inspirational.

Best wishes Maria Theophanous

Dear Marie

Thank you for your contribution. Though it may seem to you that all contributors always look on the bright side of life, this is patently not the case.

Some go through dark periods which are not relieved by medication or psychiatry. Even those with great educational or artistic ability have their less lucid moments.

When the human doctors have failed you, have you tried communication with THEOS, as in your name? Sorry for showing off my limited knowledge of languages but I believe THEOS means "GOD" in Greek. Perhaps you could ask for spiritual guidance to deal with your problems.

Best wishes, John Joyce Editor

Graphic design tutor wanted

I want to learn some graphic design packages eg Adobe Photoshop 5.5 on an iMac computer. I am looking for someone who can teach me these packages on a one to one basis.

I want to learn these packages as I want to pursue a career in graphic design. I have spent some time contacting design agencies around London and shadowing people so have a good idea of the work environment, but I do not have the relevant qualification. I

have been unemployed for a few years so I feel very frustrated now and really want to move on.

I have tried joining college courses but was not able to learn in a group as I could not keep up with the other students. I am able to learn quickly and have a basic knowledge of computers but I need to learn at my own pace, so I want individual tuition.

The tutor needs to be very patient and have some experience of working with

people with learning disability. I have access to an iMac. As I am unemployed I can only afford to pay £15 per hour.

I would appreciate it if you can help me to get in touch with a suitable person (and if you can help me to get some funding to pay for a tutor).

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Mark Vaish, Wembley

Ali Browning, from Halifax wrote to John Joyce introducing herself: this is her story. Coming from an unusual family all of whom had learning difficulties and social skills problems, she was not understood in school. She was fascinated by factual subjects but could not handle Maths, English or Science.

Just Different!

Not interested in the general topics of conversation among teenage schoolgirls, she preferred to talk about historical facts or cats – she sometimes got lost in a world of her own during class time: "I would stare at patterns made by the sunlight, and twiddling with loose threads".

She became anorexic and was obsessively clean and tidy. Though she was not able to make friends easily, some girls from the church she attended befriended her finding her amusing and intriguing with her different speech and actions. "I wanted to have friends but had no idea about how to play social games."

Meeting the man who was to become her husband was a source of help to her during her 20s when she was having a difficult time with the mental health system.

She trained as a nurse specialising in working for people with learning

is now a part-time teacher of adults with learning difficulties. Though she has not mastered the art of teamwork, she gets on well with other staff. The staff are interested in her different approach to teaching, especially people with autism. She shares in their "stimming" instead of stopping them. Suffering from Sensory Integration Dysfunctions, she is oversensitive to noise, heat, sunlight and tight clothing. She smells, tastes and touches things which other people just observe.

She had a difficult childhood, with her parents thinking she might have brain damage. Though she showed early symptoms of autism, (eg in her use of language), her therapists put it down to being highly strung and anxious and unable to slow down brain activity. Now she has some good friends who are similar to her, different, in some way, from the alleged "normal". Her determination to learn social skills and get out of her isolation have meant she has a far happier quality of life.

“ I would stare at patterns made by the sunlight, and twiddling with loose threads ”

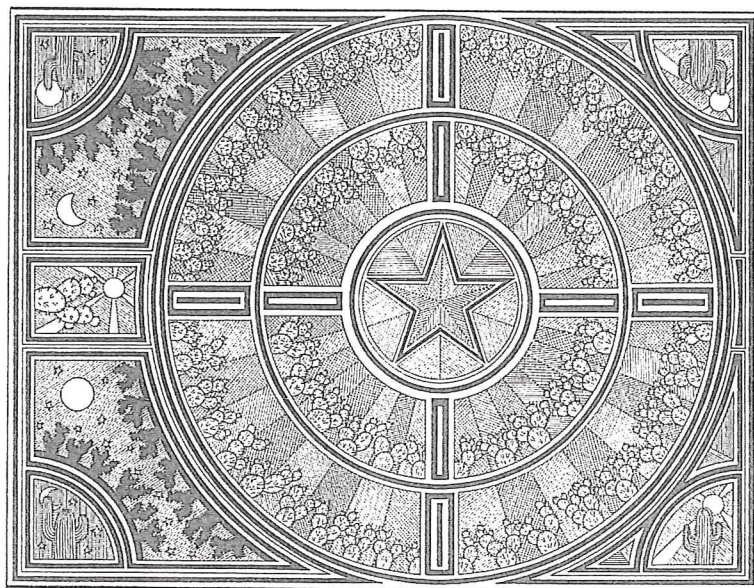
disabilities. She did not last very long, finding the team work, organisation and management that nursing required difficult. Her next venture was into Peace Studies which she had a keen interest in. She succeeded in getting a Peace Studies degree. She followed this up last year with a PGCE qualifying her to teach adults with learning difficulties.

She received a diagnosis of Dyslexia and Dyspraxia during this course. She

Empathy

Empathy
Is the greatest tool
That challenges our hearts
and minds
From the Divine conqueror
God,
Where he delivers us a
certain philosophy or
science
To us all to give better
counselling
Towards people who are
wrongly misinterpreted
In the world of law and
order.
Empathy.
Can it be tried?
I hope so.

by Reginald Pelle
Winchester



Cacti-TX-USA by Peter Myers

Peyer Myer's Life: Part two

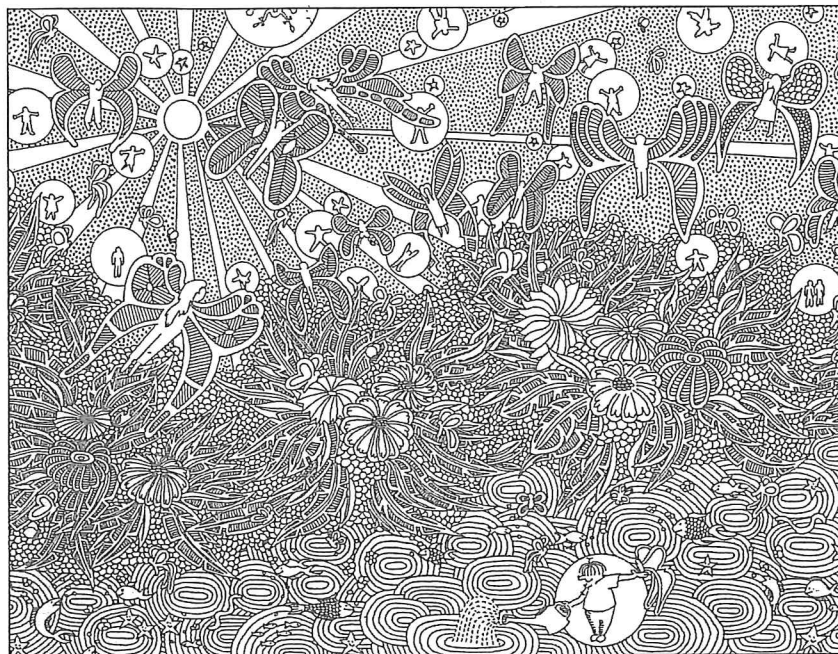
When I worked as an architectural modelmaker (1983-97) a number of models I worked on appeared in firms' broadsheets and architectural journals. I am also aware that models I worked on were exhibited at the Royal Academy and the R.I.B.A. (Royal Institute of British Architects). However, I feel that this was due to the architectural design rather than the quality of my own workmanship.

Also, shortly after working in Saudi Arabia (1983-86) an exhibition on Islamic Culture was held at Olympia and some of the models I had worked on were included.

My friend Susan has painted some of my black and white artwork in *The MAAP* (the US version of *Asperger United*) and of course I have had several pictures printed on this side of the Atlantic in *Asperger United*.

My artwork has appeared in a number of exhibitions and publications:

- in two MAAP conferences, in Chicago in 1995 and also in Indianapolis in 1999;
- I exhibited several pictures at the Autism Oxford conference held at Christchurch College in 1999;
- I am currently involved in Autism 2000 which has been displaying artwork by individuals with autism throughout Europe;
- A.S.A.-Philadelphia Chapter (USA) asked earlier this year if they could use some of my artwork to help promote their Autism Awareness Day at the Philadelphia Zoo!
- Autism Northumberland and Tyneside (A.N.T.) asked me earlier this year if they could use some of my artwork to promote their Autism Awareness Day, this time in the UK.
- More recently I produced ten pictures for The NAS for use in their project at their London Ball, held at the Dorchester Hotel to raise funds for Helen Allison School in Kent.
- I have also recently displayed some of my artwork at the "Learning can be fun" Conference, held at the University of York.



Butterflies, bubbles, flowers and fish. By Peter Myers

I retain copyright on all my artwork but I like to help and am quite happy for people to use it for a worthwhile project.

I do have other series beside my "One Line Maze" series, as opposed to other maze pictures, which are not one continuous line. A series for me is like a theme or topic, comprising a similar style or technique.

- I did several pictures developed from my own photographs or those taken by other people, before I was born or when I was very young;
- "fish-e" pictures;
- black and silver pictures;
- "waall" pictures;
- dots;
- loaves;
- symbolic impressions (hand and foot prints);
- Peter's hand pictures;
- concentric line pictures;
- and bubbles.

Sometimes I go back and re-work old ideas or themes and sometimes I develop new ones. Each time that I draw I learn, I perfect ideas and hone my skills.

Sometimes I re-work old ideas in new ways. This may lead me down another path to a slightly different idea or I may simply shoot off at a tangent, exploring an entirely new area.

You ask if I ever try my hand at work other than patterns and geometrical drawings. The answer is yes! I like to vary my work. For example, I have also done several detailed drawings.

Hope-U-like!

With best wishes, Peter Myers, York

Employment Success (continued from page 1)

"Penny kept on supporting me even when I'd got the job," Vania explains. "She came round regularly to check that everything was going well – and she stopped me from doing too much unpaid overtime! I used to stay for ages after my official work hours were finished but Penny told me to stop."

Working at the NAS has made a huge difference to Vania's life. She says, "It gives me something to look forward to at the start of every day and at the end leaves me with a sense of achievement."

She enjoys every moment of her day, even the walk to and from the underground station at each end, even though the walk in the morning is nearly 20 minutes. "I love the exercise," says Vania. "It keeps me fit!"

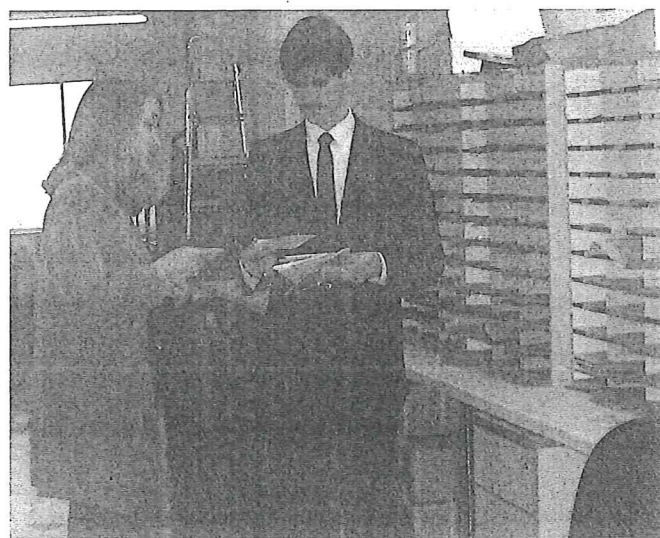
She doesn't feel tired at the end of the day and still has time to pursue her love of jazz and heavy metal rock. She loves listening to music at home on CD and follows her favourite musicians at venues like Pizza Express. On Saturdays she likes going shopping in the West End. "I don't usually buy anything but I love the atmosphere."

Vania lives with her family at home in Edgware and likes to do her share of the housework. "My Mum drew up a rota and it's fun helping to keep everything looking nice at home. It's only fair that I do my share. I like doing my bit and working at home as well as at The NAS."

She especially likes popping into one of the many cafes and bars round The NAS office in Islington at the end of the day to enjoy a well-earned cappuccino.

Vania's message to anyone looking for work is simple:

- keep your options open
- being realistic doesn't mean being negative
- keep positive and aim high.



Vania with Thomas Milner, a Prospects client gaining work experience at The NAS.

Work Fair

The Sussex Autistic Community Trust presents "A Work Fair" for People with Asperger syndrome and their carers. Saturday 25th November 2000, 9.30am-4.30pm at The University of Sussex. Cost £20 per person to include lunch & refreshments.

For further information or to book please contact:-
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The Sussex Autistic Community Trust,
Unit 5, Ore Business Park,
Hastings, TN35 5QA
Tel: 01424 715955
Fax: 01424 715956
Email: admin.sact@freeuk.com

Outsiders - a self-help group

Outsiders is a group for anyone who is isolated, whether through disability, shyness, depression, bereavement or any other reason. Several members of Outsiders have autism or Asperger syndrome. Outsiders offers the chance to meet other people, practise socialising and gain confidence.

Anyone over 16 may join and no one is turned away because of physical disability or social awkwardness. Members meet once month for lunch and there are picnics, parties and trips.

If you would like further information about this group, please call 020 7460 2244 on a Thursday between 11 and 4 p.m. or e-mail on outsiders@beeb.net



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