

No11 - JULY/AUGUST 1996

Asperger United is a self-help Newsletter run by and for people with Asperger Syndrome. Its aim is to put people with the condition in touch with one another and to provide them with information so that they can lead more independent lives.

The Asperger United Newsletter is produced by an editorial group consisting of the two current Editors; Ian Reynolds; John Joyce; assisted by Pam Yates from The Maudsley Hospital's Home Based Team For Autistic Individuals with additional support from The National Autistic Society.

ASPERGER UNITED !!!!

Letter from the Editors

From this month Asperger United goes International. Our International Network Editor is Mr John Joyce, who is contactable c/o the Asperger United International Network, The National Autistic Society. This is a very exciting step in the development of your Newsletter and we hope it helps you to extend your contacts even further.

In our next edition we hope to look at issues concerning Further Education and University. Please send us in details of your experiences. We want news of success stories, problems encountered, help that was particularly useful, etc. so get those pens working!

Thank you to everyone who has written in. We will try and use everyone's article in some way. (Please keep articles short because the very long ones are difficult to read and difficult to print).

Do not forget our competition for a new logo!!come on artists we are waiting to hear from you.

Have a good summer.

Your Editors.

Editor: Ian Reynolds

Editor International Network:

John Joyce

DISCUSSION SECTION

Relationships, Friendships, a closer look at what is involved in this complex skill.

Mark Segar, an Asperger sufferer has written 2 guides for people with autism. In this section we will take excerpts from his guides entitled 'A condensed Guide to Coping For People with Borderline Autism'

Finding the right friends

- It is often difficult to tell the difference between a true friend and a hoax friend but for autistic people, this can be many times harder. Here is a table to help you tell the difference:

True friends	Hoax friends	Enemies
Treat you the same way they treat all their friends.	May treat you differently to how they treat others.	May ignore you most of the time.
Make you feel welcome in the long term as well as the short term.	Might make you feel welcome in the short term and then drop you in the dirt.	Will make you feel unwelcome and will notice all your mistakes and may bring them to the attention of other people.
If they give you compliments, they will be genuine and sincere.	Might give you many compliments which are NOT genuine.	May give you anything from sarcasm, put-downs and temper tantrums to the silent treatment.
Will treat you as an equal.	Might often make unfair requests of you.	Will often treat you as a less important person than them.
May help you to see the truth behind other peoples hoaxes when suitable.	Might want you to make a spectacle of yourself.	What to do:
What to do:	May threaten not to be your friend anymore or play on your guilt if it is to help them get their own way.	You might have done something to annoy them or they might just be jealous of certain skills or knowledge you have. If it is jealousy they will never admit to it.
Repay them with the same attention they give you and listen to them.	What to do:	If you find them on their own at any time, they might switch to being quiet and shy towards you and you might be able to ask them awkward questions as to why they behave differently towards you than they do towards other people. Also, if they can give you a good enough reason, it might be a chance to apologise if you have annoyed them in some way and say that you will try not to annoy them as much in future.
Accept any compliments they give you by saying a simple "thank you", and then you won't make them feel silly in any way for having complimented you.	Stand up to them and don't feel guilty about telling them to p*ss off if they have said something which is obviously unfair.	
Try to show that you like them using the rules given under eye contact (see <i>body language</i>)	They could be the kind of person who gets pleasure out of hurting people more vulnerable than themselves because they feel weak and inadequate inside.	

- You are likely to meet many people who don't fit exactly into any one category in this table in which case you must use your discretion.
- Don't be living under the illusion that everyone who knows you cares about you because they don't. People who care about you will probably fall under the category of true friends or will otherwise be family.
- Never underestimate the value of a **true** friend.

Sexually related problems and points about going out

- Amongst young people, there is much more talk and humour about sex than there are people doing it.
- The rules for men and for women are different.
- If a man has had lots of girl-friends then he might be called a stud or a stallion. This is a compliment.
- Most men tend to be attracted to women who are good looking, supportive and strong-minded but this may vary from one man to another.
- If a woman has had lots of boy-friends then she might be called a sl*t, a sl*g or a tart. This is an insult, however unfair this rule may seem. When someone calls a woman a name like this for a joke, they have to make sure that it sounds like a joke and it has to be at the right time. If you're not sure when the right time is, it is better not to say it at all.
- Most women tend to be attracted to men who are fairly good looking, gentlemanly, able to read their signals on boundaries (see *body language*), polite, clean, honest, not trying too hard to impress, adaptable, positive, supportive, charismatic, fun to be with, having character in their voice, not too meek but not macho either and who show an interest in their feelings. It is rare to find a man with all these qualities together and most women don't expect perfection.
- As surely as the rules differ between women and men, so do the rules governing gays and lesbians.
- Knowing all the different swear-words and various slang is important if you want to understand most of the humour amongst young people. If you'd rather not use these words yourself then you don't have to and this might be a good thing. However, you can look them up in a dictionary if it is modern enough and large enough.
- Flirting (that is friends, usually of the opposite sex, hugging or petting each other) can get you into trouble if you try and flirt with the wrong people. If you are a man, then if you allow other people come up and flirt with you but you don't go up and flirt with them, it will probably be all right (see *boundaries*).
- If you are a woman, be choosy about the people you flirt with. If you flirt with a man who has a serious lack of respect for *boundaries*, he might start to make a nuisance of himself.
- When it comes to physical contact between yourself and other people, try to develop for yourself a sense of what is and isn't "appropriate" because other people may not want to speak their minds to you directly.
- If you have a crush on someone, don't let anyone know in public. People might start making fun of it and your chances will probably be ruined. You may secretly tell a friend who you know and trust if you think they might be able to help. Tips for asking people out are mentioned in this chapter.
- If you are a virgin, don't tell anyone and try to avoid related topics of conversation, especially if you are a man. There are plenty of virgins out there, many of them in their thirties, and very few of them actually tell people. If you have already told people, don't worry, just don't tell anyone else.
- If people make fun of you because you are a virgin, don't let them think it is getting to you and try not to let them sway you into becoming someone with just one thing on your mind as this will cause you a lot of distress.
- Also, don't worry about getting your end away just so that you can say you've done it. Besides, when asked "have you done it", it is usually more admirable to laughingly say something like "what's it to you", "that's personal" or "mind your own business". This can easily fool the other

person into thinking you've done it anyway. After all, if someone else said one of these things to you, what would they lead you into believing?

- Some men find it difficult to understand that the very idea of boosting their own egos by collecting memories of sexual liaisons with as many different women as they can is insulting or degrading to a woman's ego.
- Many people, in all honesty, find their first experience of sex disappointing.

Nights out

- The best reason for having an evening or a night out in a pub or a night-club is to have a good time and talk to people.
- You will probably have a much better time if you have a night out with friends rather than if you go out alone.
- On a night out, the rules regarding body language become more important.
- Be careful with your gaze (unless of course, you are talking with someone). If you look at someone for too long they will probably notice you out of the corner of their eye. They might then tell their friends about it and become secretly unfriendly towards you. This is especially true about men staring at women.
- Some people can be very polite to you but be rude about you behind your back. If you want a clue as to whether or not they really like you, see the rules on eye contact.
- If you have been invited to a party, it is often best to turn up at least half an hour late.
- It is good to have a bath or a shower before you go out.
- It is best not to be the first on the dance floor, even if you can't see anything wrong with this yourself. This doesn't mean you can try and persuade someone else to be the first.
- If you are at a night club and it is difficult to join in a conversation with people because of the music being too loud, then you might be one of these people who is better off in pubs or parties at people's houses.
- If you like drinking alcohol because it makes you more sociable, one or two pints is probably enough. Try not to drink to the extent that you make a spectacle of yourself because you might very well cause people to lose interest in you or to take advantage of you.
- Most people do NOT think that smoking is cool, so don't think about taking it up for this reason.
- If you go to a party at someone's house, there might be cannabis going around. Cannabis comes under many different names including gear, dope, weed, grass, pot, draw and marijuana. It is usually rolled up with tobacco into joints or spliffs. If you feel a need to join in with this walk of life, bear in mind the many risks and know that it can make you less sociable while you smoke it. Also, drugs might affect you differently to how they affect other people because your brain chemistry will be slightly different.
- Anyone who smokes a joint at a party without constantly sharing it round with anyone who wants it will be seen to be selfish or stingy.
- Be very careful where and when you talk about illegal substances, because they ARE illegal.
- NEVER buy illegal substances off the streets, it will almost invariably be a con and the people selling them might take it the wrong way and get violent if you try to be friendly with them.

Chat ups

- If you decide to go out with the thought of pulling or asking someone out in mind then the following tips might help you but it is **essential** that you first read the chapters on *body language* (especially boundaries, eye contact and dress sense), *distortions of the truth*, *conversation*, *humour and conflict* and *sex related humour*. It would be best to have in fact read all the points in the book leading up to this one.
- Chatting someone up is traditionally said to be the man's job but these days, it is not uncommon for the woman to take the active role.

- If you wish to **chat up** someone else, the best thing to do when you first meet them is just to talk to them and NOT get too close.
- Suitable boundaries may vary from one person to another (see *body language*).
- It is important not to appear too eager.
- If you are a man, don't wear too much after shave.
- Don't chat up just anyone, make sure it's someone you like.
- If a man gets a snog from a woman who is drunk, in the eyes of everyone else, he is taking advantage of her.
- If you are a man, don't drop any hints about how much you fancy someone, however subtle they may be. This will only weaken your chances. This is true for everyone.
- If you are a woman and you drop hints as above to a man, he might start expecting more of you than you meant to offer.
- If a woman doesn't want to go out with a man, she will let him know by slipping the words "my boyfriend" into the conversation. This might sometimes mean lying, but it is thought by most people to be the most gentle way of letting the man know.
- Chatting someone up is not that different to an interview. Don't forget to look at their face more than two thirds of the time whilst listening or speaking and smile a bit. If they are doing the same, it means they like you.
- If you wish to ask someone out, do it casually and sincerely and where no-one else can hear.
- The time it takes between meeting someone for the first time and becoming partners with them can be anywhere from a few minutes to hours, days, weeks, months or even years. If it only takes seconds, however, there is probably something wrong.
- You may find someone to go out with at ANY time, it is highly unpredictable.
- You might end up spending an evening, or two, or three, with someone you really like and who really builds your hopes up, only to find that they disappoint you. This can happen to anyone and is hardest to cope with when you are new to going out with people.
- Many people will go out with each other in secret or will spend much time flirting with each other but never admit that they are going out together. This is often the nature of an open relationship.
- Always be responsible and remember the importance of safer sex.

(exerpts on body language, conversation and humour will be published in the next issue)

Invitation

- It is bad manners to turn up at someone else's house uninvited unless they have said "come round any time" in which case they could mean about once a month or they could mean every other day depending on many different things.
- On the other hand, it can sometimes be difficult to know what constitutes an invitation
- It is often best to phone first before turning up at someone's house.
- In some settings eg. student halls, the rules are slightly different, because people are often running in and out of each others flats anyway. None the less, still be careful.
- An invitation to a party does NOT mean that you have to go if you don't want to.
- If you **gate-crash** a party with more than 20 people but keep a low profile, nobody should mind.
- It is sometimes difficult to know whether or not you are overstaying your welcome at some one else's house or whether they would like you to stay longer. If they say they are feeling tired then this might be a gentle hint that they want you to go. If they are smiling, giving you plenty of eye contact and showing an interest in the conversation, they probably want you to stay.

Recommended Reading

- 1) Recommended by Stephen McCarthy:
'Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
(Modern Approaches)' by Rutter and
Herson of Blackwell Science Books
- 2) Recommended by Marc Segar:
'Body Language'
by Allan Pease (Sheldon Press)
- 3) Recommended by Marc Segar:
'How to Deal with Difficult People'
by Ursula Markham (Thorsons)
- 4) Recommended by Marc Segar:
'Manwatching'
by Desmond Morris (Cape)

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I understand that this issue of Asperger United is to concentrate on relationships.

My own experience of this has been quite varied. When I left school, thirty years ago, I joined a local social organisation and with a conscious effort I made many lasting friendships, many of whom I still have today. This proves that it is possible for those with the syndrome to develop social contacts, even if it is on limited basis.

However, close relationships have proved rather more difficult for me. I have tried several of these over the years with varying degrees of success, almost leading to marriage in one case. My main problem was that I did not have the confidence or ability to go about making a firm commitment to any one person.

Perhaps one solution to this would be to forget about trying to find a partner and endeavour, instead, to establish some outside interests and hobbies, at the same time keeping one's options open as regards personal relationships.

I would welcome comments on this from other readers.

DESMOND MELDRUM

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INTERNATIONAL READERS NETWORK

Please note - In order to ensure the privacy of contributors to Asperger United full addresses will not be printed. If you would like to reply to any of the letters or requests for contacts please write to the N.A.S and we will pass your letter on to the appropriate person.

Letter from Selina Wood Woking, Surrey

My name is Selina Wood and I am 15 years old and my birthday is on 2nd July. In my family I have a 13 year old sister called Helena, my Mum and Dad. I live in Surrey. I go to the Park School (which is a special school). In September I will be going to Guildford Further Education College. I will do a course called Continuing Education and later on I would like to do a GNVQ in Health and Social Care. I would like to work in an old People's Home when I am older. I have taught myself to type and I have typed this letter.

I enjoy reading Asperger United and the things I like best in it are things about other people and the poems.

I go to lots of clubs outside school. They are Woking Wind Band on Thursday's and I play my Clarinet there (and I have passed my grade 2 exam with 122 marks and a merit). I go to a special needs Choir on Wednesday's and we sang in the Albert Hall in October and Guildford Cathedral at Christmas. I go to my church youth club on Friday's and we do things like ice skating and bowling.

I go to a special needs youth club on Monday's and I dance at the youth club. I like the Monday youth club better than the Friday youth club because everyone is friendly and talks to me but some of the people at the other one don't seem friendly and ignore me and also all of the people at the Monday youth club have problems like me but most of the people at the Friday one haven't.

If anybody wants to write to me as a pen friend I will write back.

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Letter from Leon Powell
Harefield, Middlesex

I am roughly six foot, slim with blonde hair and would really like to meet someone with similar interests. I would describe myself as a mild Asperger person although I am not well educated because I did not enjoy my school days.

I was diagnosed as an Asperger Syndrome person in February this year and would like to hear from other young adults like myself who find it difficult to socialise (I am 25).

My interests are mainly insects, fish and animals although I also paint (Ducks and Geese) and write science fiction stories.

Our home is nice (I live with my mother) and I help with gardening and general jobs around the house although I would prefer to be in my shed where I keep all my stick insects and rodents. This is where I spend most of my time when I am not at work, I work on the trolleys at Sainsbury's. I drive and I have my own car.

Some times I get very depressed because I see other blokes of my age with girlfriends and worry that I will always be alone which is my worse fear!

I have no friends just people I know at work some don't treat me kindly. I sometimes speak to pretty girls who are OK to start with but they soon realise that I am different and give me the boot! all I want is to lead a peaceful life with my animals and a partner but no one will have me!

If there is a nice girl out there who would like living with the animals I have mentioned please give me a chance because I am a kind and honest person, also any males that live not to far away who would be interested in making friends and socialising please contact me.

* * * * *

Letter from Graeme Lawson
Colchester, Essex

My name is Graeme Lawson and I have Asperger Syndrome. I am 31 years old and I have been living at Mersea Road, Colchester, Essex since March 1995. There are four clients living there and our ages range from 28 to 42 years. I am writing this letter and sending it to Asperger United magazine hoping that somebody will write back to me. My hobbies are listening to music, drama, using a computer and lately I have started reading the classics. I attend the local tech twice a week to do office skills, soon I shall start RSA and NVQ level 1 on the computer. Recently I received an award for trampolining, three of the residence go trampolining each week. Andrew, a member of staff at Mersea Road takes me to play golf in the spring and summer, I really enjoy it.

I look forward to hearing from somebody.

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Information from Japan "Asperger Supporters Club"

For information on this club contact Professor Tsujii at e-mail:
tsujii@gifu-kyoiku.ac.jp

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EUROPEAN AUTISTIC PENPALCLUB - Switzerland

For details of this club write to: Patrick Frey
Oberer Promenadenweg 4
CH-3110 Munsingen
Switzerland
Tel no: 31/721/9026

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PENPALS - USA

Contact: Kathy Lissner-Grant
3618-A Dunnica
St Louis
MO 63116 -4902
USA

TALENT SECTION

Tim Loder - 'Sketching in Spain'



OUTSIDE
GUARDIA
CIVIL STATION,
WITH CIVIL GUARD (UNTIL THEY TOLD
ME TO STOP!!
I'M PRESSIVELY STILL AROUND SINCE
FRANCO'S TIME!

TIM LODER PRADO DELRAY
30/5/96



ON EVENING AND HORSE RIDES!
WHILST WALKS (WALKS IN EVENING SO I CRACK OF PAW
ONLY (TOO HOT AFTERNOON SIESTA!))

A QUICK INK PEN SKETCH OF A
(SPANISH FARM I STAYED)

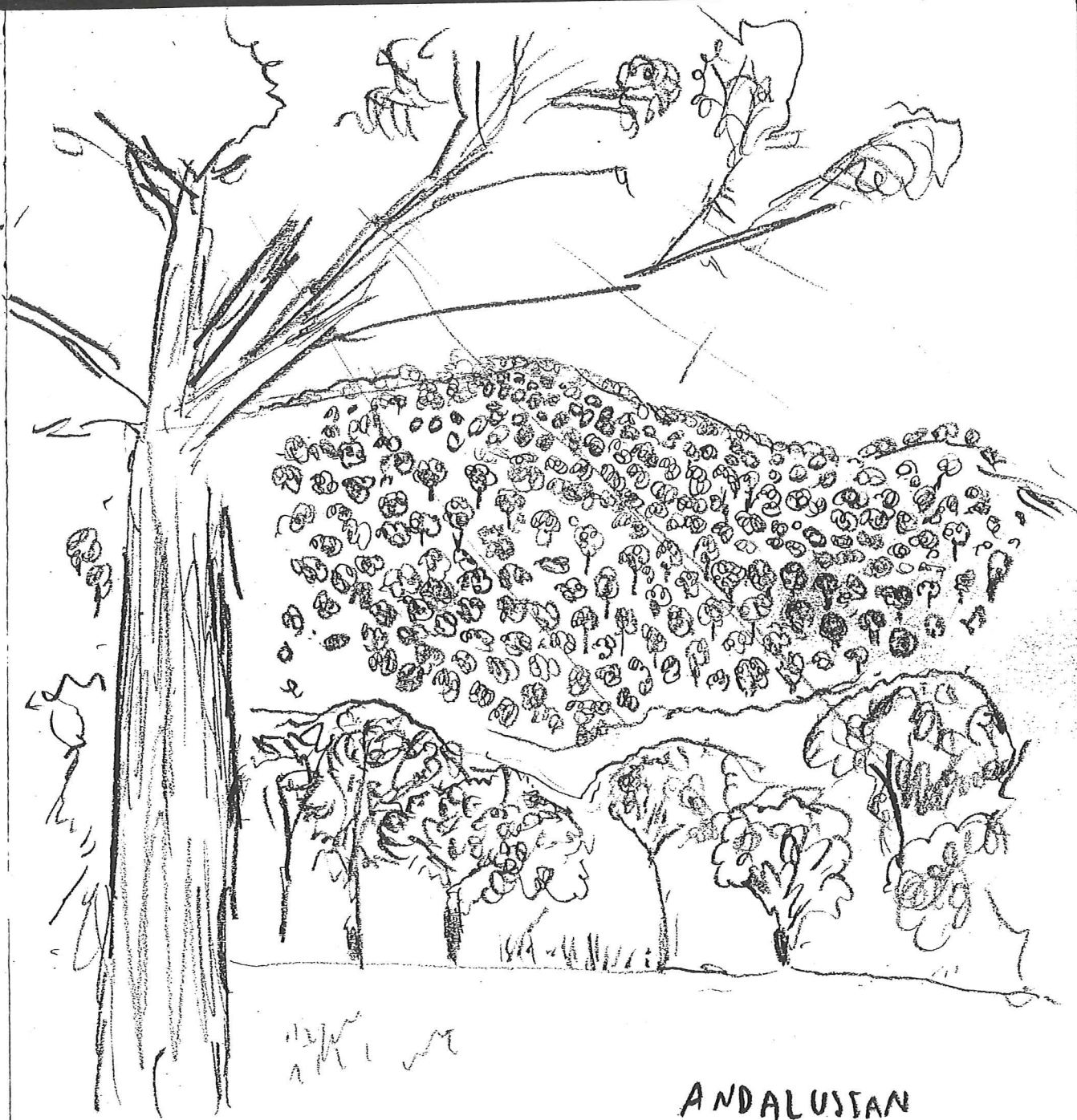
SPANISH COW, ANDALUSIA

(BEFORE I MOVED)
AFTER VISITING THE WINERY

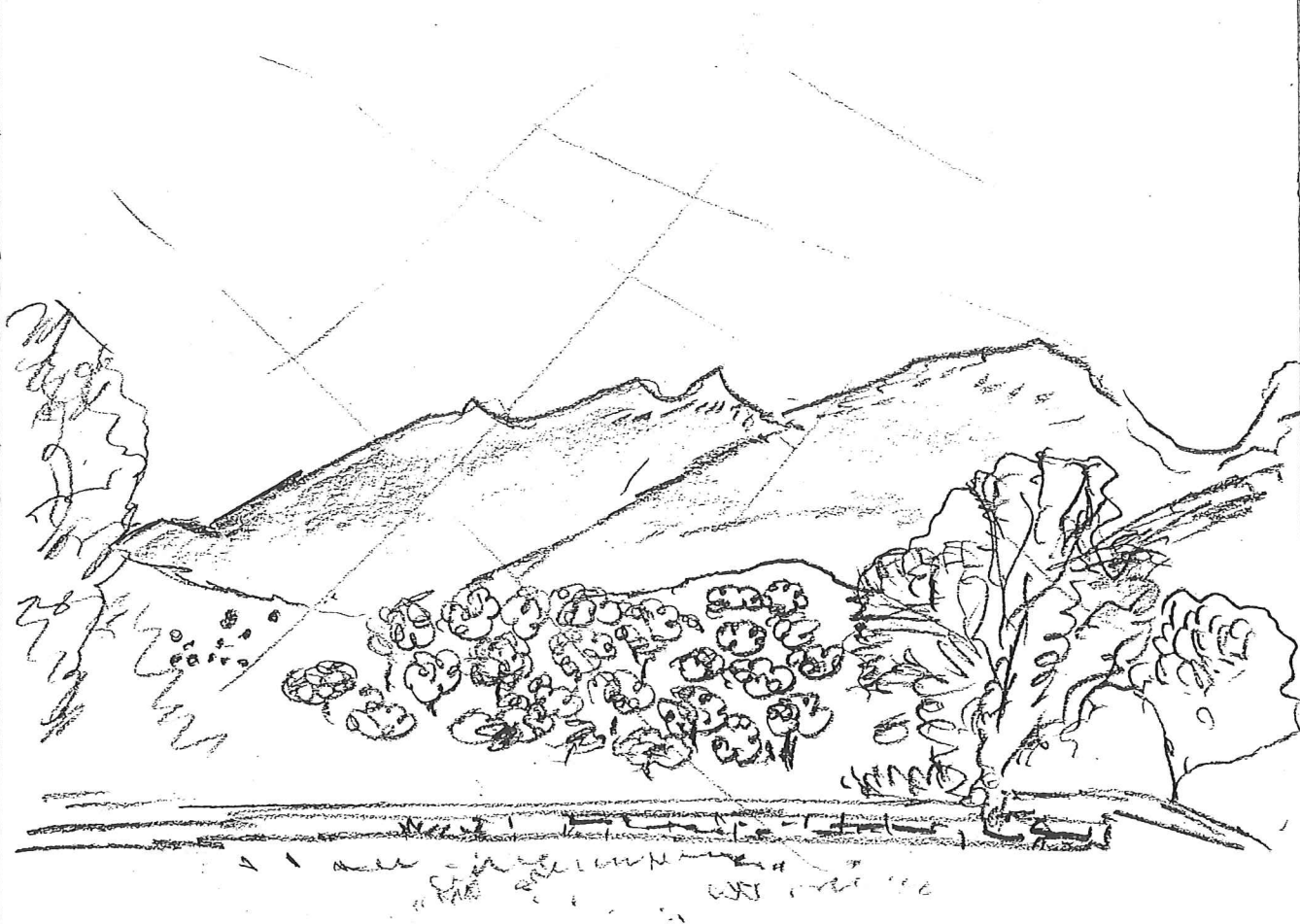
WHICH THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT
TIME TO SKETCH (A PLACE I STAYED)

TH. 30/5/96 WAS NEAR VILLAGE

OF PRADO DEL RAY,
NE. CITY OF CAJIZ, SAADLY TOMORROW
GO HOME.



ANDALUSIAN
HILLS THROUGH
TREE, WITH OLIVE &
CORT TREES
SOUTHERN SPAIN,
TIM LODER,
WEDS. 29/5/96

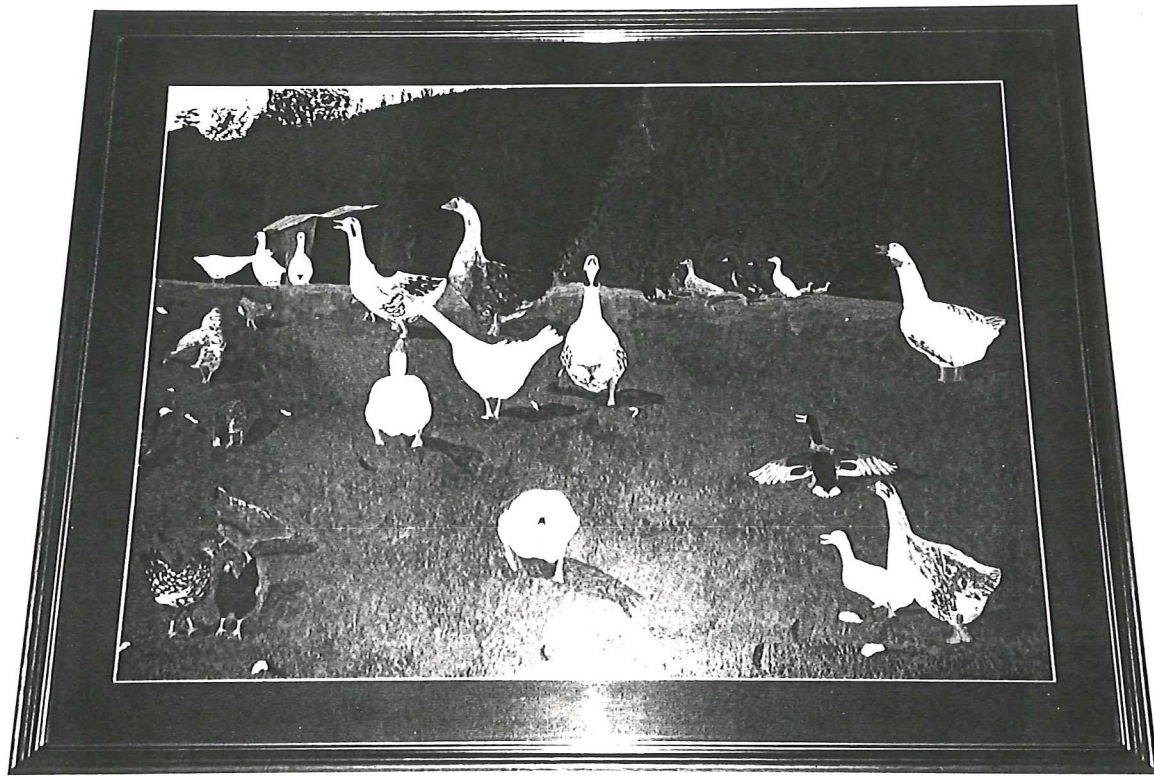


THE HILLS OF ANDALUCIA, SOUTH SPAIN,
WITH CORK AND OLIVE TREES.

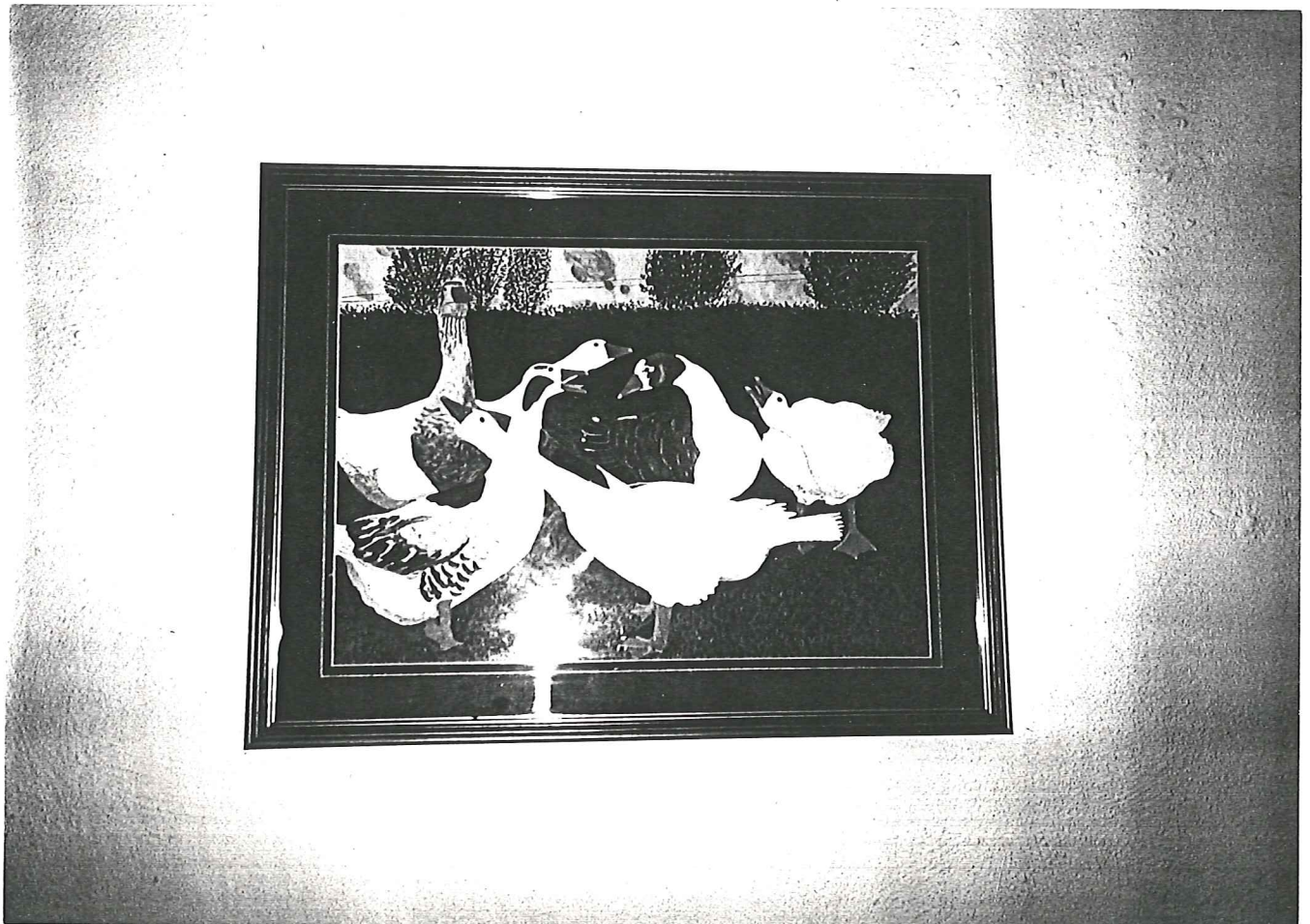
TIM LUDER,

W.H.T.

Leon Powell - 'Paintings'



Leon Powell - 'Paintings'



Stephen McCarthy - POEM

Not Normal

People say that I'm not normal
I hear it all the time
People say that I'm not normal
I've heard it down the line
People say that I'm not normal
They say I'm sort of odd
People say that I'm not normal
A funny kind of sod
People say that I'm not normal
I find it best ignoring
Yer People say that I'm not normal
Well at least I am not boring

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ADVERTS - ADVERTS!!

Hi, my name is Leigh. I am 27 years old girl, I am Autistic and Deaf. I am at the University of Central Lancashire doing Deaf Studies with Education. For my Dissertation I am researching **The Use of Sign in the Development of Autistic Children's Language.**

I am interested to hear from any adults with any kind of autism, who was taught sign language at school. Do you feel it helped your language develop? How many hours a week did you have? Did your school or adult centre use sign language, Makaton, BSL (British Sign Language), SSE Sign supported English, Paget-Gorman? etc. Please write to me with your experiences to:

Miss Leigh Norton
8 Elmwood Garth
Walton, Wakefield
West Yorkshire, WF2 6LR

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The National Autistic Society Supported Employment Scheme

OOPS - SORRY FOR ERROR - Editor. Last time we gave the wrong details for the above. The correct details are as follows:

Prospects
2nd Floor, Arena Place
1 Temple Road
Cricklewood Broadway
London NW2 6PJ

Tel no: 0181 830 6605
Fax no: 0181 830 6256

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The InterACT Centre

Would you like to: meet like-minded people: make friends: Get support in your interactions: Develop your confidence and have fun learning to act, writing plays and performing them.

The InterACT Centre is thinking of starting a Drama Group for people with Asperger Syndrome in the West London area. From September 1996 on Wednesdays 7.00pm to 9.30pm: cost £5 a week (This pays for light and heat, rent and materials. If you are not working you may get a grant from social services). If you are interested write to:

The InterACT Centre
Hanwell Community Centre
Westcott Crescent
Hanwell
London W7 1PD

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Marc Segar has written 2 articles '**A Condensed Guide To Coping For People With Borderline Autism**' (excerpts can be found on pages 3 - 6) and '**An Autist's Guide To Cultural Background Knowledge In Conversation**'. These are available from The National Autistic Society. If you would like either one of these guides then send a stamped(38p) addressed A4 envelope to Asperger United, The National Autistic Society, 276 Willesden Lane, London NW9 5RB.

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Neither The National Autistic Society or the Editors are responsible for material printed in the above adverts.

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