

A RADICAL SOLUTION
by Ron Smothermon, M.D.

September 22, 1984, midnight in a Cleveland hotel, marked a turning point in my life. I could not sleep that night and instead lay awake passing critical judgment on all the people in my life. Faces came up in my imagination one by one, and towards each face I directed criticism based on my certainty that that person needed to change to please me. Acceptance was unknown to my judgmental personality! I had done everything imaginable, from religion to psychoanalysis and various transformational trainings to become an accepting, compassionate person. Nothing worked. I had even become a successful psychiatrist and while I could help others I could not help myself. In desperation, I got on my knees beside my bed and I prayed. I didn't know if anyone was listening but I had nothing to lose, I had tried everything else. I called on God, on the outside chance that *Um* was listening, and agreed to face any experience necessary for a transformation into acceptance of others. I fell into a deep sleep before my body touched the sheets. I thought no more of this event.

Sixteen days later, on Oct. 8, 1984, I returned to my San Francisco home from England via British Air. It was a long flight, and I was exhausted. When I arrived at the airport my secretary Paige Johnson met me. Grumpy, and glad the trip was over, I drove us to my house, unloaded my baggage, and toted it through the door connecting the garage and the foyer. Paige trailed me by a few paces. As I opened the door I saw Rahman sitting on a stairway leading to the second floor.

Seeing Rahman was not a surprise. I had asked him to take care of my home in my absence. He was the ex-boyfriend of my ex-wife who had kicked him out leaving him with no place to live. I had done what I could for Rahman but he had seemed distracted and angry. What I did not know was that during the period of my one week trip to England Rahman had become very psychotic, developing a delusional belief that my ex-wife and I had kidnaped and killed his ex-wife and daughter. (As it turned out they were both fine.)

Rahman stood up on the first step of the stairs. As I peered at him he appeared to be in pain. Sweat was beading across his brow. I reached out my hand in concern and asked him if he was OK. Rahman then screamed "THAT'S IT!" in an extremely loud voice and struck me just over my left ear with a heavy metal tennis racket turned on edge. What a blow! It turned me completely around toward the door through which I had just come. Dazed, I thought, "This must be a mistake! I must be dreaming! Rahman could not have done that!" I spun myself back around to confront him and screamed in an equally loud voice, "RAHMAN! YOU'RE MY FRIEND! I LOVE YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!" I approached him to embrace him. Rahman answered by striking me again with an equally devastating blow. And again. And again. I awoke on the floor uncertain of where I was or who I was. Then awoke again. And then again. Struggling to my feet, I confronted Rahman, holding him by his shoulders. Everything came into focus as I noticed the walls covered with blood and saw a bright silvery object flash across the periphery of my vision.

My God! He had a knife! He meant to kill me! As if to confirm my insight he screamed, "I AM GOING TO KILL YOU!" and swung the dagger again, the thirteenth stab wound on the way. As he prepared for the fourteenth I came to the conclusion that I would most certainly die. In a fraction of a second I came to terms with my life, and my death. I saw over his left shoulder a hallway stretching perhaps thirty feet into the distance (there was no such hallway in my home). I could see the end of my life was a certainty. I became serene and peaceful and time slowed down so that Rahman's dagger was coming at me in slow motion. Nothing mattered. I was prepared to go. As his dagger reached the midpoint of its arc at my back, time stopped all together and action froze in place. Over Rahman's left shoulder, where the hallway had been, there appeared a light—except, it was not exactly light. It was brighter than light.

Brilliant and clear, the "light" was triangular in shape with the apex of the triangle at the top like a Christmas tree. The corners were rounded, it was about the size of a man, and beautiful beyond compare. Yet it seemed to occupy no space. Then I noticed that it was radiating love as well as light, that it loved me on a grander scale than I ever imagined possible, that it also knew everything about me, more than I knew myself and that it accepted me completely, with all my shortcomings. This made its love even more remarkable. I was transported into ecstasy and bliss. Then it posed me a question, directly, not with words—much more clearly than words allow: "Will you come now or later?"

I looked at my life to see if it was complete. My work as an author and seminar leader had just begun; and I had a three year old son for whom I was the primary parent. These two areas of my life were certainly not complete, so my answer was, it seemed to me, ordained by these circumstances. Yet the choice was not that easy. The peace of dying was a more profound pleasure than I had ever imagined could exist. "No, I stay." I was surprised to discover that I could communicate without words as easily as could this light. With that the light was gone. Time and action resumed. The fourteenth blow of the dagger hit home and ripped my back open. I fell to the floor in a state of ecstasy certain that I would survive, but unable to see how that would be possible. As I opened my eyes I noticed that the blade had just broken off of Rahman's knife, a blade seven inches long and an inch and a half wide.

Paige had succeeded in reaching the police who appeared at this moment. Rahman was taken to jail where he spent six years. I spent five hours in surgery, received five units of blood, and recovered fully, physically, in five weeks.

One particular stab wound deserves mention. It entered just above my left collar bone and came out exactly in the middle of my back. During its trip through my body it narrowly missed the carotid artery and the jugular vein, damage to either of which would have killed me, and the brachial plexus which would have paralyzed my left arm. Anatomically this is a miracle, next to impossible. There is probably not a surgeon living who would bet on his or her ability to put a knife in that space without the result of death or paralysis.

I hated Rahman for 2 1/2 years. I plotted revenge for 2 1/2 years. I suffered more intensely than I have ever suffered for 2 1/2 years. Finally, I had had enough and the transformation of my personality for which I had asked was completed in the simple decision to consider and believe that I had always been responsible for every aspect of my life, even for this murder attempt. Doing this I also chose to take responsibility for all my feelings related to the murder attempt. The hatred, the rage, the desire for revenge. I finally chose to let go and to accept.

A radically difficult solution for a radically difficult case: me.

Dr. Smothermon attended the Seattle IANDS conference last year; he has asked us to do as we saw fit with his story and we saw fit to print it.