

LOOKING FOR MY FATHER'S FACE IN THE MIRROR

How the Dreaming Earth Reflects the Unknown Parent:

To Know and Be Known

by

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*“And which of us shall find his father, know his face,  
and in what place, and in what time, and in what land?”*

*- Thomas Wolfe*



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page.....1

Table of Contents.....3

Acknowledgments.....5

Introduction.....7

    The Importance of the Origin Story.....10

    My Origin Stories.....10

Purpose & Contributions to PW Theory and Practice.....17

The Project Structure.....19

    The Art.....19

    The Process.....24

    The Contextual Essay.....27

Relevant Literature.....29

    Adoption Psychology and Identity Formation.....29

    Synchronicity Theory.....33

    Process Work Theory.....34

        PW Basics.....34

        Process Wisdom or Sentient Awareness.....38

        Nonlocality and Earth-Based Psychology.....39

        Life Myth and Childhood Dream.....40

        Dream Genes.....44

    Art and Psychological Theory.....45

The Synchronistic Events.....47

    Alligator and Life Myth.....47

    Names and Cranes.....48

    Music and Piano.....52

    Religion and Spirituality.....55

    World Events and the Astrological Charts.....57

    The Land.....58

    The Oak Tree.....61

    Falling Woman Creation Myth.....62

Photographs of Art Pieces.....65

    Journey.....65

    Songlines.....66

    Play of Life.....67

    Stones and Thread.....70

    Vision.....71

    Songlines Book.....72

    Stars In The World.....73

    Book of Names.....74

    Life Myth House.....75

Conclusion.....79

Bibliography.....81

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## INTRODUCTION

*Why do we constantly look in the mirror when we are already familiar with our appearance? What is consciousness? Is it biological, spiritual, psychological - or all of these? Why do we want to know who we are and where we are headed? What is the tendency to seek, to become aware of the path? (Mindell, 2007, p. 11)*

I don't remember exactly when I started looking into the mirror to study my face for signs of my father, but I must have been very young. I could see my mother's features clearly enough in my reflection – the shape of her face, her dark hair, her brown eyes - but I yearned for the mirror to reveal the ways I resembled my father, Zeb. I would stare into my reflection and wonder, *how do I look like my father*, but no matter how long or hard I looked, I couldn't seem to find a trace of him there. This absence left me with the feeling that something important was missing. I loved Zeb, and it confused and saddened me that I could not find his features in my own.

Much later, when I was 52-years old, it was first revealed to me that Zeb was not my biological father. This knowledge was both shockingly painful and strangely affirming – affirming because the riddle of the mirror and the lack of resemblance to Zeb **finally made sense. The puzzle pieces had finally fallen into place, and for the first time I** could clearly see and believe in the intelligence behind the force that drove to me to the mirror to search for what was missing. The new knowledge of my biological parentage impelled me back to the mirror once again, but this time it was to look for the face of my unknown father, the face of a man named, Joseph Crandell, who had died many years before, and who I would never have the chance to see or meet.

Since the unveiling of that hidden truth, looking for my father's face in the mirror has been an ongoing process of *knowing myself within a mystery* and *being known by a mystery*. It has been a process of discovery enhanced by the use of Process Work theory and methods and by the creation of expressive works of art. This project is a reflection of that discovery process, and of the many synchronistic ways that the dreaming of my **biological father and his ancestral heritage found expression through me, even though I** knew nothing of that heritage for most of my life.

My project focuses on the experience of having an unknown parent, on the psychological impact of being lied to about one's origin story, and on the ways in which unknown family myths can manifest through a person even if that person is unaware of their heritage. This project is heavily influenced by Process Work, and it explores the ways in which the "dreaming earth" or "path awareness" can create synchronistic events that move us towards knowing ourselves more deeply and towards being known and recognized by our community, by the earth, and by the spirit world. Using the Process Work method of "path awareness" allowed me to access the dreaming earth as I explored my relationship with my unknown father, and this process opened many doors that may have otherwise stayed closed to me. Arnold Mindell explains his theory of path awareness as follows:

Path awareness is actually an ancient concept. Linked to the universe, our bodies sense direction in ways that merge our personal psychology with the real and imaginary nature of the earth around us . . . Path awareness is the natural inheritance, the birthright of every human being. Path awareness is an updated form of earth-based spiritual paradigms. All of our aboriginal sisters and



brothers, our real and mythic ancient histories, speak about moving according to the directions of a living planet, a sentient earth. (Mindell, 2007, p. x)

In my exploration of a relationship with my unknown father, I found that “the directions of the living planet” were frequently guiding me in my efforts, and that my path awareness allowed me to access depths of meaning and connection that may not have been recognized otherwise.

My artistic exploration and research has been a pilgrimage capturing a “Dreaming” similar to that of the Australian Aborigines, who in the conducting of their everyday lives,

continually travel through a tightly woven world of knowledge, perception, moral code, and recollection, following a maze of invisible roads, or Songlines. Closest perhaps to the way in which birdsong maps out a territory, the Songlines are ancient and magical, but they are also precise map references. The continent is crisscrossed by a labyrinth of Songlines, and the Aborigines can sing their way along them. (Ackerman, 2003, p. 50)

Like the Aborigines, I found that

geography is memory. Every mile sings, every mountain speaks of their ancestors journeys. Nothing is irrelevant, nothing is lost to death. All things partake of life's spirit and vitality, the land is vigorously alive, unseen forces flourish, and all have a special site (or Dreaming Place) that is a spiritual home for them and their ancestors. (Ackerman, 2003, p. 51)

*The Importance of the Origin Story*

In addition to Process Work theory and practice, this project is largely based on stories: my story, the known story, the hidden story, the found story, and the created story. Most people want to know and pass on their origin stories - who they are related to, **where they come from, where they are going, why they are here, where their home and true place is** – these are all aspects of the origin story that help to define a person's primary identity. These are stories and questions that surface and resurface as we live our lives, attempt to understand ourselves, and strive for self-knowledge and awareness. As a result, this contextual essay is full of stories – stories about the personal, synchronistic, ancestral, and mythological events that surfaced as I explored my unknown father and my relationship to him.

*My Origin Stories*

I have two origin stories: the one that was told to me and that I grew up hearing, and the one that hid secretly in the shadows and drove me to the mirror to be seen. The origin story that I grew up with was that I was the only child of my mother, Susan Henricks, and my father, Zeb Barbee, and that their people came from New York and Virginia. This story was true. They were the parents I grew up with, and their lives, families, and histories influenced me in important ways. However, this story was also a lie, because there was another important part of my identity that was kept hidden and secret from me. On some unconscious level, I could feel the lie in the field of my family system – why else would I go to the mirror and look for signs of Zeb in my reflection? On some primal level, I experienced this initial lie (and the many lies that followed) as a

process of dismemberment, because it split my psyche from my self. The incongruencies left me feeling split and torn apart, without any frame or context for understanding what was happening or why. All along, little flickers, fantasies, ideas, and events that rose up from the dreaming earth into my awareness (e.g., like being driven to the mirror), but at the time they were almost impossible to believe in because the secret reality was so actively being denied by the people around me. Of course, I can now identify these flickers and signals from the dreaming earth as pieces of information and dreaming rising up from my unknown origin story.

It was Zeb who did not want me to know about my biological father, and when he married my mother he made her promise never to tell me or anyone about my biological origins. Like all of us, Zeb was influenced by his generation and his culture, and in the post-war era of the late 40s and early 50s family structures and relations were still quite rigidly defined. Deviations from the normal nuclear family still carried some stigma, and no doubt there were also personal reasons for Zeb's insistence on the secrecy, but the bottom line was that Zeb wanted to claim me as his own, and my mother supported this claim.

Even if it was meant with the best of intentions, Zeb's claim on me also cost me dearly, because claiming one thing meant denying something else. For instance, I was denied the privilege of seeing my baby photos, because Zeb felt that I too closely resembled my biological father, and so he destroyed the photos. Sadly, this same theme resurfaced when I had children of my own. When my oldest daughter, Jeannette, was three years old, I withdrew from her emotionally because I saw and felt something in her that I could not understand or explain to myself. As it turned out, Jeannette physically

resembled my biological father more than any of my other children - she carried the same features that had been so actively denied in me - and, without knowing why, something in me split off from Jeannette for many years of her childhood, which caused us both a great deal of psychological suffering and pain.

Over the years, there were many other erasures, negations, and confusions of this sort, but there is one that stands out in my mind and that I would like to share here. When I was eight years old and in third grade, I got my first pair of glasses. I remember sitting **in the back seat of our black Studebaker car as my parents drove me home from the** optometrist. I was taking my glasses off and on again and again because I found the change in my vision to be so amazing – the diffuse, fuzzy, and dreamy vision versus the clear, crisp, and bright vision. The eye-doctor had just explained to me why my vision was so diffuse: I had myopia with astigmatism in both eyes, and he explained that the condition was hereditary and that at least one of my parents had to have this same eye diagnosis. That night, when I asked my parents if they had myopia with astigmatism, they both said they did not. I repeated to them what the doctor had said to me about it being hereditary, and my mother said that I must have heard the doctor wrong . This was my first profound experience of feeling confused about my reality, of having it denied by my parents, and of knowing that I had somehow entered forbidden territory. Such lies undermined my experience of identity and reality, and inevitably lead me to stop trusting my own sense of reality and to instead melt into a diffused feeling of de-realization. As a result, this project is partially a way of naming and experiencing my reality without the rejection of who I am or the double signal of the lie in the background. In particular, making works of art that represent my relationship to an unknown father satisfied the part

of me that had been lied to, dismembered, and split apart. To materialize my reality in such a physical, tangible way brought a repressed sense of self out of the murky shadows so that I could experience a coherence and continuity of self – the inheritance of my true self.

Finally, after Zeb died in 1996 (when I was 52-years-old), my mother had a dream that inspired her to tell me the truth about my biological father, and it was then that my second origin story was revealed to me. My mother dreamed that she was driving her car, and I was locked in the trunk, and she heard me begging her to let me out of the trunk.

**After she had this dream, she worked with her own therapist to have the courage to tell** me the truth about my parentage, and this is the story she told me: In 1945, my mother was working as a secretary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, when she met Joseph Crandell and they began to date. He was an only child from Ladysmith, Wisconsin, and his parents were very religious Roman Catholics. Joseph loved to play the piano, and had been the pianist for the Notre Dame University Symphony. He had not been drafted into the war because his eyesight was impaired with astigmatism and myopia. When mom told Joseph that she was pregnant, he panicked and felt that he would be forced to marry her, so he offered to pay for an abortion. At this point my mom realized that Joseph did not love her, so she left Grand Rapids and went to North Carolina where her sister, Eva, lived and worked. Even though my mother was not Catholic, she prayed to the Virgin Mary about whether or not to have an abortion. She was afraid to have a baby with no father and no monetary support, and the cultural and family stigma and shame of being an unwed mother was great in the 1940's. Mom's gynecologist pressured her to give me up for adoption, because he felt she would not be able to support a child on her own. However,

despite these pressures, when my mother prayed to the Virgin Mother, Mary told her to have me. Then, after seeing a war movie about a mother who had abandoned her baby and always regretted it, my mother decided to keep and raise me. Eventually, she would meet Zeb, who was a Marine Corps Master Sergeant coming home from World War II, and they would marry when I was 1 year old and raise me as their child. Zeb made my mother promise to never tell me that he was not my biological father, and my mom agreed. They removed Joseph's name from my birth certificate and replaced it with Zeb's name.

This new origin story initially turned my worldview upside-down and shattered my sense of identity. I was confused and angry, but it also made sense on some deep level. All of the incongruencies that I had internalized over the years suddenly made sense, and once my initial shock and extreme anger about the truth and the lies began to subside, I began to wonder how I could get to know my biological father despite the fact that he had died in 1981. I used my awareness and my Process Work training to track flirts and signals from both consensus reality and sentient realms in order to more consciously access the myths and dreaming that had always been in and around me, but that I had never been able to believe in. By tapping into various levels of awareness and **information, I was able to reflect on the unknown parent – I was able to *know* and *be known***. There is a song by Paul Simon that says:

This is the story of how we begin to remember.

This is the powerful pulsing of love in the vein.

After the dream of falling and calling your name out

These are the roots of rhythm

And the roots of rhythm remain.

Process Work helped me to “remember” my unknown father by noticing the “roots of rhythm” and “powerful pulsing in the vein” – by bringing my attention to “the dreaming earth” behind the synchronicities characterized my process. The dreaming earth always brought forth the rhythm and myth of my origins and ancestors even when others tried to deny or cover it up - the dreaming songline somehow remained and flowed **through and out of me. In most families and cultures, stories are the central means for** passing on knowledge and identity from generation to generation, but some stories do not get passed on directly and instead find alternative avenues of expression. In my case the story arose from the sentient earth through unconscious flirts, signals, dreams, and synchronicities. The story dreamed me, I did not dream it, and only now can I appreciate the unnoticed synchronistic experiences of my life – only now can they offer me the richness of insight, a fullness of being, and an antidote to meaninglessness – only now do both of my origin stories come together to form one story that is me, one wholeness.





## PURPOSE & CONTRIBUTION TO PW THEORY AND PRACTICE

My project is a journey to find, integrate, and speak truths of my heritage using Process Work concepts and methods. Because I was denied the truth of my biological father for so long, I want to honor that truth by exploring it now and allowing others to witness that exploration. The witnessing is a vital aspect of this process as I become known and held by a Process Work learning community, and the importance of witnessing will be discussed more thoroughly later in another section.

Because the truth of my fathers' parentage has only recently been revealed to me, I feel that I am still in the midst of an unfolding process. As a result, this project has helped me deepen and forward my own meaningful "growth process" with regards to my unknown father, my identity, my family, my ancestry, and my life myth, and it is not just for me but also for my ancestors, my children, and for the future generations of my family. The knowledge and telling of one's lineage story is a birthright and a kind of **inheritance which values and honors one's histories, myths, and ancestors (whether they are biological or adopted)**, and a lineage story also values the family and cultural connections that we have with the earth. This project has helped me to deepen my relationship to the dreaming earth and to what Mindell (2007) calls, "path awareness," because the earth itself holds awareness – she remembers and helps us to access our dreaming path, and she has called me to know lost aspects of my self and my heritage.

Individuals, families, and therapists may be able to use this project as a reference for approaching and exploring relationships with an unknown parent by working with earth-based psychology, meaningful synchronistic events, dreams and myths, and expressive forms of art. In particular, this project can contribute to the field of Process

Work by offering an in-depth exploration of a relationship with an unknown parent

through the use of process-oriented theory and techniques. It demonstrates and facilitates ways and insights to connect the present to the past through noticing and unfolding flirts, through synchronistic events occurring in dreamland, and through vector meditation walking, all of which can be used to establish a feeling of continuity with an unknown parent throughout a person's life span. It shows how to facilitate sentient, non-local, earth based processes that can give an experience of wholeness or coherence in the face of loss and betrayal, and it may be of interest to anyone who wants more information on synchronistic experiences and how they can be used to access information from the sentient realm or dreaming earth. In addition, this project can contribute to the field of Process Work by reiterating the value and usefulness of combining art with Process Work theory and techniques, especially when a person's process desires some sort of material form or grounding tangibility, which can help a person to actually *feel* their reality, rather than only sensing a diffuse atmosphere of unreality, secrets, and lies.

Finally, my deepest hope is that this project will reinforce one of the primary metaskills behind Process Work, which is an atmosphere of wonder and amazement! According to Mindell (2007), "the *a priori* existence of awareness and its resulting tendency to notice and wonder are psychology's basic principles" (p. 14), and wonder itself can be viewed as a therapeutic tool, which has "an incredible ability to elicit information and encourage self-reflection" (p. 34). At the very heart of Process Work is the spirit of wonder, amazement, and curiosity, because they are essential metaskills that awaken our moment-to-moment awareness as we live and unfold the mystery of our lives.

## THE PROJECT STRUCTURE

This project is an experiential art-based and Process Work-based exploration, which mirrors, reflects, and co-creates a relationship to an unknown parent. It grows out of the challenge of not being able to meet my biological father in consensus reality because of his death, and also out of the questions that the dreaming earth or “process wisdom” has posed to me in my life. In Process Work there are several interchangeable terms that can be used to describe what I am referring to in this paper as the “dreaming earth” or “process wisdom.” Some of these additional terms include *force of silence*, *force of awareness*, *intentional field*, *sentient awareness*, *essence*, and *process mind*. My process has grown into a multifaceted project composed of artworks, witness writings of the art, readings, and a contextual essay. Important questions that guided my project focused on the mystery of why the earth has moved me to certain geographic locations or “earth spots” that carry the history of my heritage, and why my dreams, body symptoms, and other synchronistic events moved me into a deeper relationship with my biological father, Joseph Crandell, and with the more unknown aspects of myself and my myth.

*The Art*

The creative process involved in making art has been a very important and healing aspect of my life and of this project, because it has provided me with an imaginative way of feeling and processing the full value of my life and its mysteries in relation to its denials and rejections. According to Caruana (1993),

Art is a means by which the present is connected with the past and human beings with the supernatural world. Art activates the powers of the ancestral beings. Art

expresses individual and group identity, and the relationships between people and the land. (p. 10)

I love the idea of art acting as an entry point into the past, into ancestry, into identity, and into the dreaming of the land and the supernatural world. I therefore created artistic works to awaken myself to the lost aspects of my experience - to allow these unknown parts of myself to unfold and be lived with more awareness. The artwork allowed me to create and recreate a continuity of experience with my past. Bridging my past with my present conscious awareness of Joseph Crandell has helped to heal my split psyche and allowed a new sense of coherency, continuity, and identity to be realized. Through dreams and synchronistic happenings that arose as I worked on my project, I experienced a profound connection to the land and to my biological father and ancestral heritage in parallel or spiritual worlds.

Many of these experiences materialized in works of art, and my project consists of nine art pieces, all of which are interconnected around the theme of an unknown father and the dreaming earth. Each piece is based on a synchronistic event that occurred in the past when I was not aware of my biological father or while seeking out information about him, and each piece is also connected to one of the many theoretical themes informing my project. These theoretical themes are based on Arnold Mindell's earth-based psychology, and more specifically his theories of the "Process Wisdom" and "Path Awareness." The art works were presented publicly to an audience of peers, teachers, family, and friends and were accompanied by my personal readings and comments about each piece. The art works were as follows:

1. *JOURNEY (Painting)*: In this painting I am with a guiding Crane, and together we are on the path to find my unknown father. It represents the overriding theme of a quest to discover a father-daughter relationship in a parallel dreaming world, and the use of moment-to-moment process-mind awareness as the quest unfolds.
2. *SONGLINES (Earth-Vector Map)*: This map portrays the vectors or directions **that my life story has taken and the directions and locations that the dreaming earth has moved me in my life.** Mindell (2007) explains the meaning of Australian songlines as

earth-based experiences expressed as songs and mythic stories. These songlines are experienced as directions or vibrations believed to have been sung originally by mythic ancestors who created the physical characteristics of earth, the myriad forms of life, and the codes governing conduct and relationships among humans. For Aboriginal Australian peoples, vectors or directions are personal forms of nonlocal community and earth wisdom operating in dreamtime. Songlines are paths through the landscape; they are symbolic markers that organize the land and give it spiritual meaning. These paths connect dreamtime with present time and space. (p. 51)

3. *THE PLAY OF LIFE (Earth-Vector Playing Cards)*: This piece is modeled on a deck of playing cards. On one side of the cards are earth spots, and on the other side there are photos of people, dreaming imagery, and essence experiences related to my search for an unknown father. Each card is stitched together with

- sewing thread to represent the deep connection between the earth and my life. The zigzag stitching connects the image and the actual earth spot reality so that one penetrates the other. The cards are symbolically stitched in red, white, and black threads to reflect the background themes of my life in consensus reality, dreaming, and essence/sentience levels, as well my experiences with the dreaming earth as it is described in *Earth-Based Psychology* (Mindell, 2007). Playing with the cards and the juxtapositions and themes in the cards is a way of playing with the magic of a-causal, non-local connections and to reflect on the infinite connections and insights that are possible. These earth cards reflect the songlines of my life.
4. *STONES AND THREADS (Multi-Media Sculpture)*: This sculpture reflects the background theme of spirituality and religion and the ways in which the Roman Catholic religion of my unknown father manifested through me in a mysterious way. The sculpture is also designed as a kind of vessel for honoring the spirits of **my ancestors, my unknown brothers and sisters, and the generations to come.**
  5. *VISION (Dreamgene Body Symptom Collage Book)*: This book reflects the background theme of body symptoms and the ways in which my astigmatism and myopic vision functioned as “dream genes” from my father. The book is made up of collage materials, personal photographs and my art.
  6. *SONGLINES BOOK (Songline Book 1)*: This songline book is a collage of personal photographs, art works, and a CD of music that witness art and the artist as a journey through the flow of generations. The journey begins with Joseph

Crandell, then moves on to me, and ends with my children. This book specifically mirrors a family myth or path that has manifested through expressive arts such as piano, music, poetry, art, and dance.

7. *STARS AND THE WORLD (Songline Book # 2)*: This songline book is a collage of personal photographs and a composite astrology reading of Joseph and myself. It reflects the background theme of patterns found in the astrological readings of the stars and planets and also, how I experience myself in the history of the world, which also, reflects patterns and synchronicities of how I know my father in the world.
8. *BOOK OF NAMES (Songline Book #3)*: This songline book is made up of the names of my Crandell ancestors and the synchronicities of naming, which point to a non-local, "process wisdom" experience. It also explores the Crandell Crest and its connection to cranes, which became a background theme and ally for the exploration of my heritage and lineage.
9. *LIFE MYTH HOUSE (House Sculpture)*: This house sculpture represents my life myth and, more specifically, the experience of my childhood dream that occurred when I was six years old. The different dream figures within the house are the same ones that were in my dream: my five-year-old self, my parents, an alligator, and many baby animals. The house has an attic for my alligator-ally dreaming and eight different rooms representing the eight different themes of my project and the artwork, which include lineage, life myth, piano and art, earth vectors, father-daughter relationship, the world, the stars, and vision. These symbolic rooms that

were closed to my conscious awareness can now be accessed and integrated into the space and time of my life and life myth. The house is covered in an earth map of Ladysmith, Wisconsin, an ancestral homeland of the Crandell's.

### *The Process*

While the completion of each work of art was important, the most significant aspect was not the final product, but instead the creative process and relationship to my father that unfolded while the art was being made. There are many different ways to enter into the creative process, and my own artistic approach was informed by a combination of the Open Art Studio method and Process Work theory and methods. Open Art Studio techniques suggest that you first write an intention for your art, then create the art, then witness the art by writing a poem, story, song, or dialogue about it, and finally read your intention and witness writing to others while showing them the artwork. For this project, instead of always creating and writing out an initial intention, I sometimes allowed my inner and outer flirts (as they are described by Process Work theory) to guide my creative process and my relationship to the artistic material. In Process Work, flirts are described as follows:

Flirts are the first way in which the Essence world arises in our awareness, the first way that we experience the movement of the Intentional field. Flirts are quick, evanescent, nonverbal sensations, visual flickers, moods, and hunches that suddenly catch our attention. Such experiences occur vary rapidly. . . . Such Flirt-like experiences are of such brief duration that we normally do not stay with them long enough to help them unfold and come into consciousness. They are fleeting



and non-consensual. The moment we notice a Flirt that has captured our attention, we have caught the tail of a creative process in the midst of unfolding. (Mindell, 2005, pp. 23-24)

In this way, my exploration of flirts and artistic expression is a journey of trusting my experience! By trusting, staying open to, and following the flirts that arose during my explorations, I was able to unfold information held within the flirts and make them a **more conscious part of my awareness.** “If you stay close to this murky and magical moment, you will discover the beginning of new and creative worlds” (Mindell, 2005, p. 6), which can then guide and deepen one’s explorations and creative processes. This type of process amplified my internal flirts and also gave them external expression in material form. The experiential and material aspect of the project was so important because it gave form to a formless, unknown father. The process became a material reality which I could experience through all my senses or channels of awareness, including proprioception, vision, sound, movement in play, and relationship in synchronistic happenings in the world and universe. The unknown father becomes embodied in the art and allowed me to have access to something that was previously denied to me. I became aware of how my father and I are entangled – of how I experienced my father within me.

The Open Art Studio technique of witnessing (self witnessing and witnessing from others) was an important aspect of my creative process. Through this project I created and bore witness to an unfolding truth about my history and my self, and it is important that others bear witness to it as well because it was kept secret and hidden for so long. The artistic process works with both the observer and observed so that new directions, deeper meanings, and more awareness can arise. Allowing others to witness

the art, the stories, and the process that created the art is important because my inner work is not just for me but also for the community or world which creates and transforms the fields awareness. Witnessing is a ritual of remembering, a renewal of mystery, and a reminder of the ways in which life reflects on itself.

Creating art in this way was both an expression and deepening of my experiences. The impulse to create, not for the finished product, but for the learning that happens in the process, is where some of my deepest insights and learning occurred. In this way, the art works all come together to create an unfolding – the beauty of the interplay of the patterns – not to prove anything but just to allow the actual experience of the synchronicities to reveal themselves. Following the flirts in the creative process awakened something ancient that had been asleep in me, and it pulled me into my true nature so that I could play with it, know it, and recognize inherent parts of myself that had not been mirrored in my upbringing. In this process something found me, and my artwork reflects this experience of being found. Something found and recognized me in the creative exploration that occurs beyond space and time, and the art itself acted as a mirror reflecting the pattern of the earth's dreaming journey to guide and to find the **unknown father. I have the experience of being guided, recognized, and known by my** father, Joseph Crandell. This invaluable process created room for something to show itself – for something to say, "I'm here" - and in a way too precious to express simply, this process is like the parent I never had but is always there.

*The Contextual Essay*

In addition to the works of art and the accompanying presentation, my project also includes this contextual essay. The contextual essay offers more detail into some of the stories and processes behind the works of art, and it is also designed to provide the theoretical basis that informed my approach and project. The essay outlines my purpose and intention for the project, the theories and literature relevant to my explorations, the structural components of my project, my personal learnings and experiences, and the Process Work significance and applications that can be derived from the project.

As the reader has probably noticed, each page has one sentence that I have highlighted in red. The red line symbolizes the story of my Crandell bloodline, a story that is also a journey and a path of exploration for the reader. My life is a continuing bloodline, an unfolding path from an unknown beginning to another unknown ending, and from one generation to another. I want to invite the reader into an experience of a sacred world tradition, where like the Native American Indians use red ochre paint to prepare themselves for a journey into other realms, or women in India use red henna to paint the soles of their feet to bring harmony and sensitivity to their purpose and direction on the earth; I symbolically paint my story red and attune and materialize the truth of my blood history to the memory and wisdom of the Earth.



## RELEVANT LITERATURE

### *Adoption Psychology and Identity Formation*

Much of the psychological literature regarding the experience of adoption or of an unknown parent is focused on the issues of loss and identity formation. Mainstream psychology holds the view that

children who grow up apart from their family of origin will require explanation and clarification as the realization of their family status grows. Without this type of information, they are likely to experience increased difficulty in resolving the inexplicable losses associated with being adopted. (Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990, p. 281)

In other words, children who are not raised by or told about their biological parents and family members are likely to experience a deep sense of loss and an inability to resolve **their losses over those missing roles. Such losses are often compounded by the fact that** unknown parentage and family heritage are frequently associated with uncertain identity formation. When information or accessibility to a person's biological heritage is missing, a sense of belonging may be impaired or absent, causing disruptions in identity formation that can wound a person on psychological, physical, and spiritual levels.

Others (Fisk, 1964; Weidler, 1978b) also have concluded that the adopted adolescent's identity formation is impaired because an essential part of himself or herself has been cut off and remains unknown. These writers are obviously echoing Erikson's belief in the importance of having an unbroken genetic and historical attachment to the past, present, and future in the process of identity consolidation. Weidler (1978b), like Sants (1964), discusses how the lack of a

“blood line” complicates the process of identity consolidation by the absence of “biological mutuality” in adoptive families. (Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990, p. 152)

Erik Erikson's (1994, 1997) theory of psychological development and identity relies on eight stages or developmental challenges that people must contend with in a lifetime. He proposes that the inadequate resolution of any one of these challenges may result in feelings of inadequacy, which can affect the formation of ego identity. Much of the literature on adoption focuses in on Stage 5 of Erikson's model, *identity versus role confusion*, because it is at this stage that adolescents are faced with resolving any identity confusion or *identity diffusion*, which is an unclear or fluctuating sense of personal identity (Erikson, 1994). The goal of Stage 5 is to integrate the aspects of ego identity formed throughout infancy and childhood so that they “can merge to become a comfortable and workable whole. . . . the sense of identity means ‘being at one with oneself’” (Monte & Sollod, 2003, pp. 330-331). This stage can pose a challenge for adoptees who experience “an absence of generational sequence . . . [because they] not only must form a synthesis of past and future, but must also integrate the now with those parts of self that have been left in the past” (Goebel & Lott, 1986, p. 6) and are often unknown.

Most of the adoption literature focuses on adoptees who are aware of their **adoption status, but in cases where individuals are unaware of the existence of a** biological parent and heritage, identity formation may be affected in more indirect and unconscious ways. For example, in my own experience, the existence of my biological father was kept hidden from me, and yet there were many indirect and confusing signals

throughout my childhood that contributed to an unreal and diffuse sense of my identity. Having no context for or external verification of the reason for these inner incongruencies can make it very difficult for a person integrate and form his or her identity into a comfortable whole. An adoptee who has been lied to and then later discovers the truth of their biological history will likely have the additional experiences of feeling betrayed and a loss of trust:

"I've seen secrets play out in a number of different ways," said Mary O'Leary Wiley, a psychologist based in Pennsylvania who specializes in adoption issues . . . the young adult questions everything that has ever been told to them and wonders if they can trust anything in their life," Wiley said. "It shakes them to the core and causes great difficulty on a personal level but also with trust among a family." (Friedman, 2008)

Discovering the existence of an unknown biological parent as a mature adult, I felt an extreme sense of betrayal and mistrust for all of the years that I had been lied to and the many times my reality had been actively denied, but the knowledge also provided me with the opportunity to identify and explore the missing or incongruous pieces of my **identity. As a result of this process, I have gotten closer to the sense of wholeness that** Erikson refers to in his theory of identity formation. In the future, when I approach his last developmental stage of old age, I will enter into the *ego integrity versus despair* stage with a greater likelihood of integrating and successfully resolving the challenge. In this final stage of Erikson's theory, people look back on their lives and feel either integrity or despair based on whether they have successfully integrated their identities and achieved meaningful goals (Erikson, 1994, 1997). An individual who is unaware of their biological

heritage may find themselves in despair during and near the end of their life because they are left with an ego identity that is somehow split apart, illegitimate, and not integrated into a meaningful whole. Gaining knowledge about the identity of an unknown parent can contribute to a sense of integrity near the end of life because this knowledge can provide an unbroken wholeness of identity. For me, the process of uncovering the identity of and meaningful connections to my biological father and ancestry has moved me from the despair of existential loss to the experience of personal meaning and integrity.

A significant amount of literature suggests both the importance and the difficulties associated with locating and contacting the unknown parent. While direct contact of this sort can no doubt be important and useful, many adoptees and artificially inseminated children will never have a chance to manifest such a connection or meeting because the parent is dead or simply unable to be found. Process Work literature provides **a model that does not necessarily depend on the physical actuality of the unknown parent,** nor does it depend on such a fixed definition of identity as being so ego based. Diamond & Jones (2004) suggest that identity can be fluid, and that there is a large spectrum between our primary identities (i.e., our momentary ego identities) and our secondary identities (i.e., the more unknown aspects of self that we are least identified with but which are a part of our emergent selves). This spectrum of identity is related to the Process Work theory that there are three levels of reality (Diamond & Jones, 2004), which include consensus reality, the dreaming realm, and the sentient realm (these will be discussed in more detail later in this section). These various levels of reality can not only help people access various levels of their identity and experience, but it can also provide



the flexibility to access an unknown parent through nonlocal and dreaming avenues. In other words, one need not necessarily meet a parent in consensus reality in order to still have an important connection to them that can provide important psychological experiences and opportunities for personal growth – a theory that is at the very heart of my project.

### *Synchronicity Theory*

The theory of synchronicity is also central to my project, and I was inspired by the many synchronistic events that occurred or were revealed while exploring my unknown heritage. Jung (1997) was the first to popularize the connection between synchronicity and psychology, and he described synchronicity as a

*meaningful coincidence* of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved. . . . [and] it is sometimes difficult to avoid the impression that there is a sort of foreknowledge of the coming series of events. (pp. 93-94)

In other words, Jung noticed that experiences of coincidence often contained profound and relevant meanings, and that these coincidences were so improbable that they could not be due only to chance. Instead, Jung believed that there must be a governing principle behind synchronistic events that is linked to the collective unconscious. According to Jung (1997), the contents of the collective unconscious “are not personal but collective; **that is, they do not belong to one individual alone but to a whole group of individuals . . .** or even to the whole of mankind” (p. 56). Synchronistic events, along with mythical patterns, dreams, and visions, are all meaningful teleological events surfacing through the

psyche from the collective unconscious.

Mindell (1987) also recognizes the importance of synchronistic events and describes them as an aspect of “the secondary process which has been split off . . . and which, therefore, appears in dreams, double signals, and even the surrounding world” (p. 99). Mindell expanded on Jung’s theory of synchronicity by noticing the ways in which synchronistic meanings and purposes can also be carried in body symptoms, a phenomenon that Mindell (1998) refers to as the *dreambody*. In accordance with the theories of the quantum physicist, David Bohm, Mindell believes that synchronistic events may be psychologically connected to the theories of nonlocality and entanglement (i.e., the connection between all things).

At the heart of the universe, there are no separate parts to anything, and that everything is connected to everything else. . . . the world is an ‘unbroken wholeness’; everything is nonlocally interconnected. We need to learn to perceive holistically because our world and the entire universe is actually interconnected. (Polich, 2001, p. 101)

Within this context of nonlocality, synchronicities can be viewed as originating not only from the collective unconscious but also from the broader realm of the process wisdom.

### *Process Work Theory*

#### *PW Basics*

Diamond & Jones (2004) describe the practice of Process Work as understanding “process” as the flow of experience in oneself and in the environment and following this flow in a differentiated way. . . . Following the

flow of process involves caring for the absurd and impossible . . . [and] going with what is happening in the moment rather than resisting it. pp. 17-18

Arnold Mindell, the founder of Process Work, “coined the expression ‘the dream happening in the moment’ to convey the idea that a numinous background to everyday reality manifests continually and in a multitude of ways” (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. xii), and my project is a study of how I explored and unfolded the “dream happening in the moment” as it related to my experience of exploring an unknown father. Such an approach can “prevent us from being victimized by our experiences” (p. 19) and by the victim role, because it provides meaning and purpose to the events that are occurring.

Process Work suggests that there are three levels of consciousness: consensus reality, dreamland, and the sentient realm. Consensus reality is “the everyday world of time and space that is generally agreed upon as ‘real’ and is perceived through everyday awareness” (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. 13). Dreamland is “the world of the dreams, projections, emotions, fantasies, and the like” (2004, p. 13), and the essence or sentient realm is “a sentient reality beneath the threshold of awareness, an unbroken wholeness out of which signals, dreams, and all other experiential phenomena arise” (2004, pp. 13-14). The process of getting to know my biological father and the new depths of my **identity took place on all three of these levels of consciousness. At different times and in different ways they all played an important part in my discovery and growth process.** For instance, on a consensual reality (CR) level, I researched Joseph Crandell and his people, and I physically traveled to places connected to him such as his gravesite. However, on a dreamland level, my CR experiences were the stage upon which roles, synchronicities, dreams and my artistic process could be played out to reveal meaningful information and

connections. The importance of synchronicity and artwork has already been discussed in this paper, but I would briefly like to say something here about roles, particularly ghost roles. When a field or system contains a secret or something forbidden, it can be called a “ghost role” because it’s presence is felt even if it is not acknowledged directly. “Ghosts are implicit or embedded elements of the dreaming process . . . [and] are implied in what is said and not said, rather than mentioned directly” (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. 49).

The secret of my parentage was a ghost role in our family system, which was always felt **but never acknowledged. Once the secret was revealed, however, the ghost role did not** have such a strong confusing and numbing hold on the field because it was finally occupied in the more tangible way of researching his birth and death certificates and finding his pictures in his college yearbook.

On a sentient or essence level, I followed the subtle flirts that moved me to explore and follow particular directions. According to Mindell (2007),

Sentient awareness is an *essence experience* of a nondualistic world. Sentient awareness is physical and spiritual, gravitational and psychological. Like the German word *spuren-* to sense, to find, to make a path- sentient awareness is close to the idea of the Tao, the Way. (p. 17)

Mindell (2007) goes on to explain that the first principle of the sentient level is that it “is nonlocal, lies at the root of consciousness, and precedes all manifestations” (p.16), and it is a subtle feeling that just barely crosses the threshold of awareness. I experienced an awareness of the sentient level in my project when I allowed myself to track and follow subtle body feelings and flirts in my environment that lead to direction, purpose, and meaning related to my experience of an unknown father. These flirts moved me to create

works of art reflecting this process.

Mindell (2007) states that process wisdom is “a superpositional kind of intelligence that seeks to know itself through the diversity of your parallel worlds” and he calls “participating with this intelligence ‘zigzagging’ or ‘process wisdom’” (p. 103).

Mindell (2007) also defines zigzag as “process wisdom moving through all directions and balanced around a myth” (p. 247.) By staying connected to process wisdom and

zigzagging back and forth between consensus reality and sentient dreaming, I was able to access the many different aspects, levels, and energies constellated within my process. If

**I had stayed close only to my consensus reality, I would have once again been denying**

the energy that drew me to the mirror – the energy of my ancestral history and dreaming.

However, by following the flirts and entering into the nonlocality of the dreaming and

sentient levels, I was able to incorporate the victim role of rejection and denial of my

heritage, and integrate this into my life myth, which includes all of these parts. Now

nothing is denied and all parts and roles can be seen as aspects of wholeness.

As I was finishing my project, I had a dream of seeing a magnificent Moose, standing in the back of my mother's house. I was in a pink living room that had been cleared of my mother's furniture, and I was retrieving some of my belongings from the empty house. My daughter, Heather, called to me to come see “The Rack,” and when I looked out the back window, I saw the quiet stillness of a numinous male Moose standing in the marshy dark green forest looking at us with his rack of antlers held upward. He raised his head to the sky, lowering the antlers behind him and then returned to looking at us. Soon, another male Moose joined him in the distance. When I unfolded this dream, I felt that the Moose spirit was one with his nature, and that his message for me was an

experience of being one with myself, the nature of me. He was looking directly at me – mirroring me – his eyes acknowledging me and telling me, “I am here.” This dream helped me to feel that the father who suggested the abortion to my mother has now become the healing ally, who brought me on this journey to wholeness, to become one with my nature. At the end of the dream, a process work diplomate and teacher gave me a wedding gift for my daughter, Jeannette, and her husband, Matt. Jeannette was the daughter that looked so much like Joseph Crandell and whose unconsciously known features made it difficult for me to connect with her in the ways that I longed for when she was a young child. As I write this, I feel strongly that the dream is a gift that restores and celebrates wholeness. Not only the wholeness of finding a missing parent and aspect of personal identity, but also of finding a more complete balance of gender roles in my life. The wedding gift in the dream represents a coming together and celebration of both the male and female – the yin and yang – aspects of myself that can now be united in love instead of rejection. The dream also suggests to me that my lineage is gifted by my Process Work teachers, guides, and community; that this gift will carry on into future generations.

#### *Process Wisdom or Sentient Awareness*

As mentioned earlier, process wisdom or sentient awareness is the background force behind all realms of consciousness. It is the teleological drive behind everything - like the law of the universe containing all potentials and tendencies within it. The theory of this force is at the very foundation of my project, and synchronistic events can be seen as a manifestation of this process wisdom – a way in which it takes form and surfaces in

sentient, dreamland, and consensus reality levels. It is a nonlocal field and its force can pull you in certain directions with or without your awareness, just as I was pulled to certain geographic locations that were connected to my biological father despite having no knowledge of him.

### *Nonlocality and Earth-Based Psychology*

According to Mindell (2007), “*the universe is a sentient being . . . this sentience is non-local, lies at the root of consciousness, and precedes all manifestations*” (p. 16). In this context, nonlocality is referring to an aspect of awareness that not only resides in our bodies or minds, but permeates everything. Mindell’s earth-based psychology is therefore based on the “possibility that what we call our own awareness may precede existence – and that it actually belongs to the earth, or even to the whole universe” (p. 11), and that “the direction that we take, the path that we can describe, is not the entire path. The *real* path was preceded by sentient awareness of the earth, an awareness we can barely speak of” (p.13).

Mindell’s earth-based psychology includes a method of walking meditation based on body feelings or sentient awareness and on a person’s inherent sense of the earth’s **directions (i.e., north, south, east, west). This meditation practice can deepen a person’s** spiritual and psychological sentient awareness, which can then be used to resolve problems or gain more understandings or awareness. In describing how to do this meditation, Mindell (2007) states,

I will use vectors (directions or arrows) to graphically represent subtle body feelings and earth directions. For me vectors are real- after all they indicate a

literal north, south, east, west. At the same time they are **imaginary, as in your dream like sense of where your feelings are headed.** Directions are organized partially by physical forces such as gravity and magnetism, and partially by spiritual, earth based experiences such as the grandparents that Native Americans have imagined as the four directions. (p. 50)

In addition to such earth-based meditations, Mindell also suggests that “the universe . . . is a self-reflecting and sentient being,” (p. 16) that has a desire to know itself. In this way, *the earth dreams us* in certain directions so that it may get to know itself better through us. Because it wants to know and be known, the earth dreams and pulls us in ways that will help us wake up to its messages and meanings. From this perspective, the synchronistic events surrounding my story of origin can be seen as the earth’s attempt to dream me so that both the earth and myself could get to know that story and that dreaming better. What drove me to the mirror at such a young age? What was I actually searching for? What wanted to be seen? Perhaps the answer is found in the dreaming earth – perhaps it drove me to the mirror to self-reflect and to forward a teleological drive to notice meaning and purpose.

### *Life Myth and Childhood Dream*

Process Work views people as having a life myth that manifests in various ways throughout a lifetime, and a person’s first childhood nighttime dream can provide a glimpse into the patterns within his or her life myth.

Jung originally coined the term “life myth” to describe a patterning for life-long personal development. He found that childhood dreams, which often stayed in a



person's memory into adulthood, revealed an archetypal or mythic pattern for a person's life. Like an astrological chart, the childhood dream was not a predetermined path, but a picture of tendencies, represented symbolically. Mindell extended Jung's work on life myth and childhood dreams by proposing that patterning for a person's life can also be seen in recurrent and long-term experiences, such as chronic symptoms, illness, addictions, and relationship patterns. Mindell sees a life myth as a form of "psychological inheritance," which includes tendencies related to parents, ancestors, cultural context, and historical background. A person can work with a life myth consciously and creatively, instead of being unconsciously propelled by it. (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. 148)

My own childhood dream clearly reflects patterns contained within my life myth, which includes the myth of having an unknown biological father who was kept secret from me. In the dream, I am six years old and standing in front of our living room window looking out and seeing my parents getting out of their black Studebaker car to come into the house. I am sad and crying because I know I cannot say goodbye to them, and I will never see them again. I have agreed to exchange myself for the baby animals upstairs, in the attic, who were captured by an alligator and forced to care for him. I begin to walk up the attic steps, and as I go up, the baby animals are coming down the steps. They are joyful and free, and I am sad knowing that I'm sacrificing myself for these baby animals – that I will now have to care for and serve the alligator and be imprisoned in the attic.

This was a repeating dream throughout my childhood, and there are several themes or patterns within it that reflect aspects of my life myth and aspects of how I

approach my artwork, this project, and life itself. In the dream, the alligator is a dreamfigure that can be linked to the ghost of the missing father in the attic – something ancient and of my prehistory, like the alligator is prehistoric to humans, surviving and enduring through the extinctions of the ages. The prehistoric alligator is an instinctual force, but in the dream, I sacrifice my own instinctual nature. I sacrifice the girl who wants to go out to her parents, wants to play, wants her innocent relationship to the world to remain intact. I'm identified with loss, sadness, and sacrificing myself, but there is this other force (the alligator) that is detached, demands my attention, and follows his instinct **without apology. These two dream figures are both me. The dream and the alligator are** calling me to pick up my own instinctual powers – to grab the truth of my parentage and dive deeply with it, to then turn and wrestle it, and finally to digest and integrate this new identity.

Childhood dreams typically show a combination of genes from both parents, and often a conflict of some sort. By favoring one of these genes . . . We marginalize the other . . . Marginalization comes about spontaneously and unconsciously. By identifying ourselves with only some of our parts, we recreate an identity based on marginalizing other parts. These marginalized parts almost always turn up as symptoms or as scary dream figures seeking attention. (Mindell, 2004, p. 153)

The alligator is also a master of stillness, and in their moments of stillness, I am reminded of the deep stillness of the ancient earth and the power of eternal renewal.

In stillness your body likely has its own mind and knows or sees the Tao – that is, the Way, or where you are headed. The Tao is, after all a kind of directional awareness. The words *way* and *direction* refer to a mixture of real-world

directions, dreamlike experiences, and ineffable or mystical experiences. . . .

Within the framework of the path of awareness, stillness refers to temporarily reducing the business, the noise of your everyday mind so that subtler experiences and sentient awareness can appear. In this sense, stillness is not emptiness, but rather an open space in which path awareness can arise. (Mindell, 2007, pp. 25-26)

The dreamfigures of the baby animals represent a kind of renewal – a chance for repressed aspects of myself to be released and to find joy in their freedom. The baby animals get their chance to live - something was freed, awakened and renewed in its recognition of itself – which mirrors the part of my biological heritage that was repressed but now gets to live and know itself. For me, what has been renewed is meaning, faith, love, music, pleasure, connection to my body, and to the earth's body. The freedom of the baby animals feels like the spirit of play and a renewal of the earth of my body and spirit, and my artwork embodies that spirit of play. Being frozen in the primary identity of loss can stop the process of emergent wholeness. Play is a sort of antidote to that one-sidedness; it melts the frozen state and nurtures spontaneous creativity. It renews because it is free and it transforms – there is constant change, interaction, movement, and surprise. Interestingly, the German word, *Speilkind*, literally translates as “play child,” and in German it refers to a child born out of wedlock. I am a “play child” in both senses, because I was born out of wedlock and because the baby animals in my childhood dream are representing playfulness, innocence, and renewal.

The play of art is such a big part of my life and my renewal process, and the zigzag pattern of an alligator's teeth reminds me of the way I approach and unfolded the

artistic process. The zigzag pattern is based on stillness (the zig) and then the flirt (the zag) – I meditate in stillness and wait for something to emerge, then I grab its beauty, pattern, and meaning. This is a style that I use not just in my artwork, but also as a **therapist and in relationships. Both the stillness and the grabbing have been important** themes in my life, and I sometimes struggle to find the right balance between them, and it has been a challenge for me to learn not to be against grabbing and to take what I want in relationship and in life.

### *Dream Genes*

In addition to genetics related to DNA, Mindell proposes that biological parents also pass down *dream genes*. “Personal history is a combination of fact and fiction, genetics and myth. The story of where you come from, who your ancestors are, is linked to biological patterns you carry from the past” (Mindell, 2004, p. 137). As a result, “your problems carry not only the genetics but also parts of the unsolved problems of your parents (or imagined parents) and ancestors” (p. 144).

“Psychological patterns that appear to be inherited, or at least passed down, can be found in childhood dreams. These patterns are narrations or recountings . . . recountings are a psychological parallel or counterpart to genetic expression, which is also a patterned account occurring on a string [chromosomes] of countable inherited units of genes. . . . It seems to me that such dream recountings are assemblages of units predicting our physical and psychological behavior. . . . Jung believed that the mythic images seen in dreams are inherited

phenomenological blueprints coming from the experiences of our ancestors.

(Mindell, 2004, pp. 148-149)

The theory of dream genes are important to my project because there are many mythic patterns in my life that were passed down from my unknown father, and are finding expression on a transgenerational spectrum. These dream genes are discussed in detail throughout the paper, and include themes like creativity, music, names, body symptoms, religion, etc., which were passed on from Joseph as a part of his mythical and dreaming inheritance.

#### *Art and Psychological Theory*

Jung was one of the first people to connect the fields of psychology and artistic expression. The connection was based on his theory of *active imagination*, which describes the process of “turning attention and curiosity towards the inner world of the imagination and expressing it symbolically” (Chodorow, 2006, p. 215) through creative forms such as art. Jung believed that imagination or the artistic impulse originated from the depths of the personal and collective unconscious and therefore had the capacity to reflect the depths of the psyche through art. Jung was well known for employing the technique himself and for his prolific paintings, mandalas, and architectural designs. My project is largely based on the creation of artwork as a way of exploring my psyche, my unknown father, and the dreaming earth that guided me through the process. I combine Jung's theory of active imagination (from which the Open Studio Process evolved) with the Process Work theory that creative impulses not only contain reflections of the psyche but also reflections of the nonlocal, dreaming earth.

Creativity is always there – waiting for you to notice at any moment in the “almost nothing” that catches your attention. From a Process Work perspective, art is a kind of co-created experience between you and the *Intentional Field*. “I don’t have to be the creator; things have their own life force . . . that escorts them into their incomparable self. I simply have to be available, open, and surrender to the flow of the Intentional Field as it moves my body, my voice, hands, heart, and mind. (Mindell, 2005, p. 2)

## THE SYNCHRONISTIC EVENTS

### *Alligator and Life Myth*



As a part of my research, I wanted to visit Joseph's hometown of Ladysmith, Wisconsin, where I looked up the birth and death certificates of my ancestors. While I was there, I wanted to see if I could find Joseph's original home and visit the graves of my ancestors. As my husband and I were driving on the highway to Ladysmith, the alligator of my childhood dream magically appeared! Traveling at 65 miles an hour, a **black car suddenly cut in front of us so that Tom had to put on his brakes, and this car** had a large alligator sitting on the back dashboard. The alligator was not alive, but it was real and had been stuffed and preserved by a taxidermist. This synchronicity was profound for me, and I felt my life-myth ally was with me and that a non-local dreaming was blessing my journey to visit the earth, the town, and the graves of my ancestors. I quickly took a photograph of the alligator as our cars were speeding down Route 90 to Ladysmith, and I wondered if this somehow reflected an ancestral dreamtime earth songline that was guiding my journey to visit and honor my ancestors.

*Names and Cranes*

The name Joseph means, “God’s Gracious Gift,” and the name Crandell comes from an ancestral affiliation with cranes. The original name on my birth certificate was Susette Jo Crandell, but, after Zeb and my mom married, they changed the name on my birth certificate to Susette Jo Barbee. I remember asking my mom where the name Jo came from, and she told me that my father had given me that name. Of course, in my mind that meant that Zeb had given me the name, but in truth my mother had given me the name Jo as a witnessing of my biological father’s parentage. Later, when I had my own children, I wanted to somehow honor Zeb’s choice of names for me, and so I named my first daughter, Jeannette, which is a feminine French derivative of Joseph. I also named my fourth daughter, Rebecca Jo, and my first grandchild’s name turned out to be Josephine, and she was born to my daughter Susan, who is a musician. Joseph was also a musician (pianist), and I later found out that the slang names for the piano keys are “little Joe’s” and the “Joanna’s.” In addition, Joseph’s grandmothers was named Joanna, and I had had a strong desire to name my son, Jessie, which I later found out had been the name of Joseph’s mother and my grandmother.

In one way or another, naming always held the grain of truth about my biological ancestry – a truth that kept signaling, flirting, and calling to me and my family over time and generations. I felt a deep sadness when I learned that I had not honored my dad, Zeb,



when I chose those names for my children, and I was also sad because the naming became a wounding for Zeb, and because the ongoing lie prevented me from acknowledging and expressing a deeper gratitude for him and for his love, care, and adoption of me as his daughter. This entanglement of lies and truth points to a deeper mystery and a quest for understanding, which lies at the root or essence and is beyond polarities. Interestingly, the word “lie” also means “direction,” and there was always something behind the lies that pointed me towards the direction of truth, and something behind the truth that pointed me back towards the importance of the lies. I feel that this circular reasoning is nicely expressed in a quote from the Tao Te Ching: “She trusts people who are trustworthy./ She also trusts people who aren’t trustworthy./ This is true trust” (Mitchell, 2006, p. 49). On a sentient level, all points of view are important and needed.

Another synchronistic way in which my ancestral dreaming manifested is through a connection between the Crandell Crest (i.e., the crest of Joseph’s family), and the birds called cranes. The Crandell Crest is derived from the Old English word *cran*, which in Middle English became Crane, and refers to the large wading birds with long legs, necks, and beaks. The “dell” part of the name Crandell comes from the word *dal*, which means hollow or valley. When put all together, the name Crandell indicates “one who dwells in the valley of the cranes.” This etymology is meaningful to me because whooping cranes and sandhill cranes nest in and begin their migration from Baraboo, Wisconsin, which is only a few miles from Trillium farm (where I vacationed with my family) and just south-east of Ladysmith, Wisconsin (where Joseph was born and where his parents and grandparents had lived). The whooping crane flock in Wisconsin was on the brink of

extinction thirty years ago, but a man named, George Archibald (from the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin) took it upon himself to learn the cranes' mating dance and to mirror it back to the cranes so that they would not forget how to reproduce. Over a 4-year period, he danced with the cranes until they became fertile and could be artificially impregnated. Similar to this man with his beloved cranes, I feel like my project has been a process of mirroring latent generative patterns of my ancestral imprinting, so that I too can awaken some fertile land within me that wants to live what was previously unknown, inaccessible, and on the brink of being lost forever.

In addition to my fraternal family actually "dwelling in a valley of cranes," crane dreaming also found its way to and flirted with my daughter, Jeannette (who looks so much like Joseph). There was a time when Jeannette sent me several cards with cranes on them before she or I ever knew about the Crandell family or the crane connection. The cranes also flirted with me, since, for some unknown reason, I kept all of these crane cards and still have them today.

According to de Vries (1984), cranes have been symbolically viewed as a positive augury or omen, because "when a crane appears suddenly, he is a herald of an end of a war" (p. 116). What is interesting and synchronistic about this symbolism is that Joseph and I were both born at the end of world wars. Joseph was born in the year of 1919, which was one year after the end of World War I, and it was that year that the League of Nations was formed to create and sustain peace between the world nations. Similarly, I was born one year after the end of World War II, and it was during that year that the United Nations was formed to prevent world wars in the future.

Also, in China and Japan, cranes symbolize longevity and immortality because they are believed “to live a thousand years . . . and the annual return of the crane was a symbol of regeneration” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1996, p. 240). Like alligators, cranes are ancient and are “thought to be about ten million years old . . . making it the oldest known bird species still surviving” (International Crane Foundation, 2009). This symbolism speaks to my experience of the way in which my biological dreaming is somehow eternal and immortal – it survived secrecy and lies, and it will continue to live on for generations.

Finally, there is one more flirt-song that I would like to mention here, that captures the yearning for lost generations and the desire to honor our shared humanity. In my research on cranes, I came across a club called, The Folded Crane Club. This is a club of Japanese children, and one of their rituals is to sing the following poem (by Sankichi Toge) as they float paper lanterns down the Ohta River to console the spirits of the dead:

Give back my father, give back my mother,

Give grandpa back, grandma back,

Give our sons and daughters back.

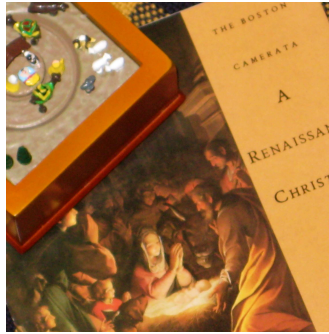
Give me back myself, give mankind back,

Give womankind back

Give each back to each other.

(Lifton, 1998, p.157)

*Music and Piano*



I was amazed to find out that Joseph was a pianist, because I have always been drawn to the piano. I wanted to play the piano throughout my childhood, but we did not have one and could not afford to buy one. However, our neighbor had a piano, and she agreed that I could practice playing at her house. My experience with piano lessons only lasted a short while, but the desire to have a piano remained, and when I got married and moved to Chicago, I bought a piano with the intention to learn how to play it. My daughter, Susan, was the most drawn to the piano and eventually studied opera and became a classical opera singer, musical performer, and musical teacher. My other daughter, Rebecca Jo, is a singer and has a band called Sing-Sing, and she writes and performs her own music. This musical legacy in my family appears to have its roots in a sort of dream gene passed down from Joseph. My daughter Susan has even had several ancestral musical dreams of a man playing the piano. In one dream he points to photographs on the piano and tells her that the people in the photos are her ancestors. Susan was 20-years-old and in college when she had this dream, and it was close to the time when my dad, Zeb, died in 1996, and mom told me about Joseph the following year. Below is an excerpt from Susan's journal entry on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1995"

I had a dream that I was in a beautiful museum – things of my ancestors. I came across a Persian organ – painted beautiful colors, there were pinkish/orange – green dots. Very beautiful – there were two glass panels that contained the faces of my ancestors/ holy men that revolved past as I played the organ. I turned circular wheels to play and there were several layers of keys – I looked past the organ while I was playing, to a beautiful ballroom – *very old*. I had danced there. I wasn't playing the organ with western music. It was very neat. My ankle was circling and playing this melody – it rotated.

This dream holds a strong connection with the most mysterious parallel experience of feeling a direct communication or visit from Joseph that I ever had. It was near Christmas, and I was looking at Joseph's photograph while working on my project. Earlier in the day, I had placed a small music box of a Christmas nativity scene next to me on the coffee table, which my daughter Susan had given me. The nativity scene was circular and had the figures of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus surrounded by shepherds and animals. I decided to listen to a new CD of Renaissance Christmas Songs that I had just bought. While I was listening to the CD, the music box spontaneously began to play the Christmas carol, Silent Night. It played one whole verse before stopping. I was shocked because the lid was closed, and I had not touched it. Because my Process Work training had taught me how to follow flirts, I decided to look and see what piece of music was playing on the CD. The name of the 17th century Christian French carol was "Joseph Est Bien Marrie," which in English translates as, "Joseph is well married." In the Bible, Joseph was the earthly father of Jesus, and this is a song that values the place of Joseph in the divine birth and life of Christ. I was in a state of amazement and awe that

the music box had played at the same moment that I was looking at a photo of Joseph and listening to that particular carol. I felt certain that I was somehow being contacted by my father's spirit or presence. It is difficult to use words to explain it, but I again had the experience of my father saying, "I am here."

*Religion and Spirituality*



As mentioned earlier, Joseph came from a strong Roman Catholic background. My own parents were Southern Baptist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian, but I also had an attraction to the Catholic faith and to the Virgin Mother Mary in particular. Then, during my teen years, I had a romantic crush on Tom, who had been raised in a Roman Catholic family. When I was 15 years old, Zeb knew of my interest in Tom and he warned me that if I ever married a Roman Catholic he would have nothing to do with me. This was likely an attempt on Zeb's part to once again deny any unconscious connections I may have had to my biological father, but the dreaming was too strong and his warnings did not deter me. I did fall in love with Tom, and I married him in a Roman Catholic Church in my hometown of Manassas, Virginia. When we moved to Evanston, Illinois, I started attending a Catholic church with Tom every Sunday. I was confirmed into the Roman Catholic church in my early 30's, I baptized all five of my 5 children in a Roman Catholic church, and I sent all of my children to a Roman Catholic elementary school.

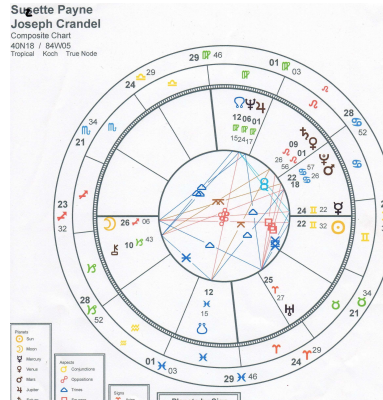
I had a powerful numinous dream about marrying Tom in the Catholic Church, which inspired me to marry him and reflected an important theme in my earlier childhood life myth dream. The following is an excerpt from the dream:

I am dressed in white rags with ashtrays for shoes and walking up many steps to an altar with Tom who is dressed in red velvet robes like a Roman Catholic Pope. At the top of the stairs, Tom is crying and opens his mouth, which is full of **barbed wire. I remove the barbed wire from his mouth and a fountain begins to** flow, with singing birds and children running down a green hill. As I follow the children, I come to a Black Hearse with a Clown sitting on top of it.

When I awoke from the dream, I felt happy about the sacredness of the marriage and profound feelings of healing and love, but I was also afraid that the image of the clown sitting on the hearse was a message saying that life was meaningless and a kind of cosmic joke.



## World Events and the Astrological Charts



I was curious to see if my father's astrological chart when compared with my own would have any synchronistic information or meaning for our non-consensus reality relationship. I asked a professional astrologer named, Arifa Boehmer, to do a composite astrological chart and reading of me and Joseph. I was touched to find that the Double Sagittarius and Gemini Sun in my own chart point to going on a quest to find out and see what happens between us. Another strong cosmic connection is that Joseph's Venus sign is in Cancer, which is my birth sun sign and means that love flows easily to me from him. My Venus is in the House of Leo, which is the sign of the father, and the strongest connection in the reading of our composite chart showed optimism and a heart **connected to my sun sign of Cancer. There was a lot of Cancer in his chart as well, and** the sign of Cancer is often associated with family. Although Joseph and I are both only children, we both ended up having large families of our own (Joseph had 8 children, and I had 5). Finding these patterns and connections in our lives is like stitching together the threads of life in order to form a fabric that creates its own beauty and symmetries – a music or a songline of synchronistic events.

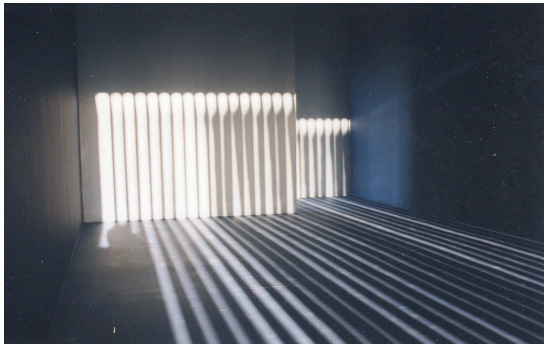
*The Land*



Long before I knew that Joseph was my biological father and that he was from Wisconsin, I overheard some women talking in the YMCA changing room in Evanston, Illinois. They were talking about going on vacation and staying at a bed and breakfast farm called, Trillium. Something about it caught my attention and interested me, so I asked the women more about it. They told me that it was located a few miles outside of LaFarge, Wisconsin (which is about a 5 hour drive from Evanston) and that it is in the midst of Amish farmland. Trillium ended up being our family's regular vacation spot, and I took my children there 3 to 4 times a year so that we could all experience the open space, the nature, and the feeling that we had been transported back in time. Trillium was a restful and loving haven where the kids could run free, visit the farm animals, see cows giving birth, explore the vastness and freedom of nature, and enjoy the sounds and slower moving life. I felt that this earth spot was truer to my nature and my sense of home - I felt that the land embraced me and that I embraced it. Many years later, I would find out that my biological father was from this area of Wisconsin and that my biological great-uncle was born not far from Trillium. This land was connected to my ancestral home and I felt I was drawn to it long before I knew the history of my Crandell heritage.

After my mom told me about Joseph Crandell, I was so touched to realize that for twelve years a mysterious force had brought me back to this earth spot and heart-home,

which had resonated so deeply with me and comforted me. This synchronicity confirmed a deeper meaning in the middle of so many losses in my life. I had lost my known identity, and I had lost my dad, Zeb (not only because of his physical death but also because of the death of my belief in him as my biological dad). I had also gained and lost my biological father, Joseph Crandell, all in one big sweep – the revelation of his existence was followed by the knowledge that he was already dead. I also experienced a **death of trust – so many of my family members had kept this important secret from me,** and it was difficult to trust in the midst of the crushing feelings of betrayal and loss. However, there was something healing in the knowledge of the earth spot called Trillium - being called to and existing on the earth of my ancestors gave me courage and faith in a deeper organizing principle or process.



*Evening* by James Payne

Another meaningful earth-based synchronicity happened when my son, James, was given a sculptural internship at the Franconia Sculpture Park. James created a piece called, “Evening,” which is located in Franconia Park, next to Route 8, which is just a one hour drive from Joseph’s birth place of Ladysmith, Wisconsin (also on Route 8). A few miles further down the road on Route 8 is Hazelden, Minnesota, which was an

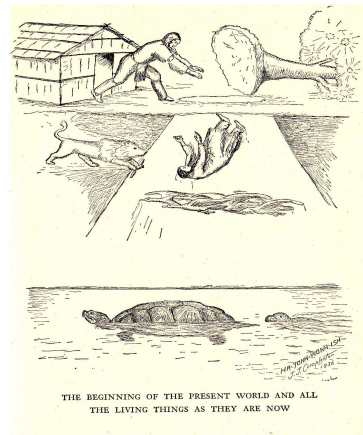
important place for me because for several years, I regularly traveled there to study and attend classes on the effects of alcoholic family systems. Route 8, traveling from Ladysmith to Franconia to Hazelden, feels like an earth's songline for me and the generations of my family

The Crandell Family gravesite is also just off of Route 8 in Ladysmith, Wisconsin, and going there was a deeply meaningful experience for me, and one which **solidified my feeling of belonging to the Crandell family heritage. Directly in front of the** Crandell family stone marker was a pink and red stone, which had the letter S etched onto it. When I saw the S, I had the experience of not being forgotten – that somehow the S on that stone was the S of my name, and it marked my presence there among my ancestors.

*The Oak Tree*



At the beginning of my project, I decided to paint a picture of myself looking in the mirror to search for an image of Joseph. As I painted and followed flirts and inspirations, my face became his, and then his body eventually became an oak tree. When I went further with the creative process, I found that I wanted to draw a door in the trunk of the tree that I could open and enter – a door that would grant me access to an inner dreaming of him and to find him in me. Two months later, I decided to visit Joseph's gravesite for the first time in Grand Rapids, Michigan where he had lived in his adult life and had met my mother. When I found his headstone in the cemetery, I was astounded to find that enormous oak trees surround his gravesite. I took a photograph of the oak tree nearest his headstone, which shaded his grave from a view of a statue of the Virgin Mary. When I looked at the image captured in the camera, there was a white light on the trunk of the tree at the same location where I had painted the door on my painting of the oak tree, and the shape of the light "door" is the same shape as the statue of Mary. Even though Joseph was dead, this synchronistic experience suggested that perhaps in some nonlocal sentient way I always did and always will have access to my unknown father - that a door is always there if I use my awareness to look, notice, and unfold it, and that it is supported by a spiritual, parallel world.

*Falling Woman Creation Myth*

There is a myth told by the Seneca Native American Indians that reflects my journey to find my father in parallel worlds. I was given Chief Jessie Cornplanter's drawing of this myth when my biological grandmother, Sah-ney-wey, had died. She was adopted by the Beaver Clan of the Seneca tribe of the Great Lakes Region of New York State, because she had helped them to save their land (the Tonawanda Reservation) from a Federal Project Dam.

The version of the myth that I know is from a book on Seneca myths by Parker (1989) called, *Seneca Myths & Folk Tales*. It is a creation/origin myth in which a warrior killed a chief so that he could marry the chief's daughter. The warrior hid the chief's body in a celestial tree that governed over their world in the sky. Eventually the chief's daughter marries a different man, becomes pregnant and sets out to find her missing father. She uproots the great tree in order to find him inside the tree, and the hole created beneath the tree "had penetrated the crust of the upper world" and the jealous warrior pushed her into the hole as she looked down into another world. She fell and went far down out of sight into "the depths of the darkness below" (Parker, 1989, p. 61).

Strange bird-creatures came to assist her as she fell towards the waters below, and she was gently lowered onto the broad back of the turtle. Then more creatures came and

one by one they dove to the bottom of the water seeking to find earth to plant upon the turtle's back . . . Many creatures sought to find the bottom of the water but could not. At last the creature called Muskrat made the attempt and only succeeded in touching the bottom with his nose but this was sufficient for he was enabled to smear it upon the shell and the earth immediately grew. (p. 62)

As the earth began to grow from the turtles back, the woman noticed that she has a broken root in her hand from the celestial tree that housed her father, and "she sunk into the soil where she had fallen and this too began to grow until it formed a tree with all manner of fruits and flowers and bore a luminous orb at its top by which the new world became illuminated" (p. 63). She gave birth to her daughter and the earth grew in size as her daughter traveled the earth in all its directions.

When I read this story, I was awed that this original drawing was given to me and also by the way that this creation story can be seen as a mirror of my own. Like the chief, **my own father was "killed" in my experience because I was denied any knowledge of** him, and by the time I did know of him he had already physically died. And like the chief's daughter, I set out to find my father. Within my art and at the cemetery, I find a numinous experience of Joseph in a tree – in an aspect of the earth and its celestial dreaming. The journey to find my father was like falling into another world, where ancient forces and dreaming creatures guided me, so that together we could co-create a new, coherent world. From the remnants of my father's tree, a new tree takes root so that it may grow and know itself in the earth of my body and in the generations to come.

Such synchronicities astound me! They point to the dreaming earth and to ancestral patterns that emerge independent of any causality or former knowledge – they suggest that the universe may indeed be getting to know itself through a nonlocal field of awareness, and that I am a co-creator with that intentional field. This myth is shared by many Native American tribes around the Great Lakes Region, where the earth has been named Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan and New York, and where my biological ancestors have lived and died and my children and grandchildren continue to be born. Through the research for this project, I have seen and felt the earth dreaming songlines in these earth spots as connected to my biological lineage in both my mothers and fathers ancestry.



PHOTOGRAPHS OF ART PIECES

The following pages are photos of the artworks I created for this project.

*Journey*



*Songlines Map*



Play of Life



front

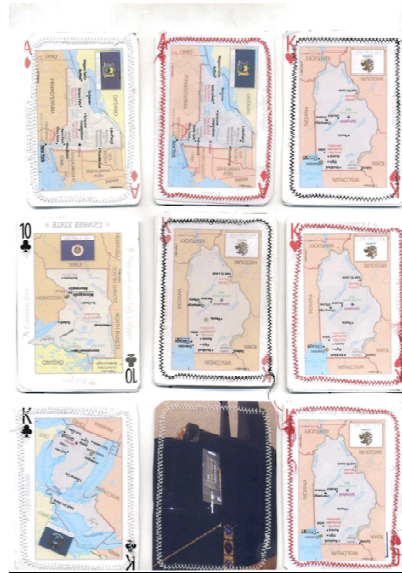


back





front



back





front



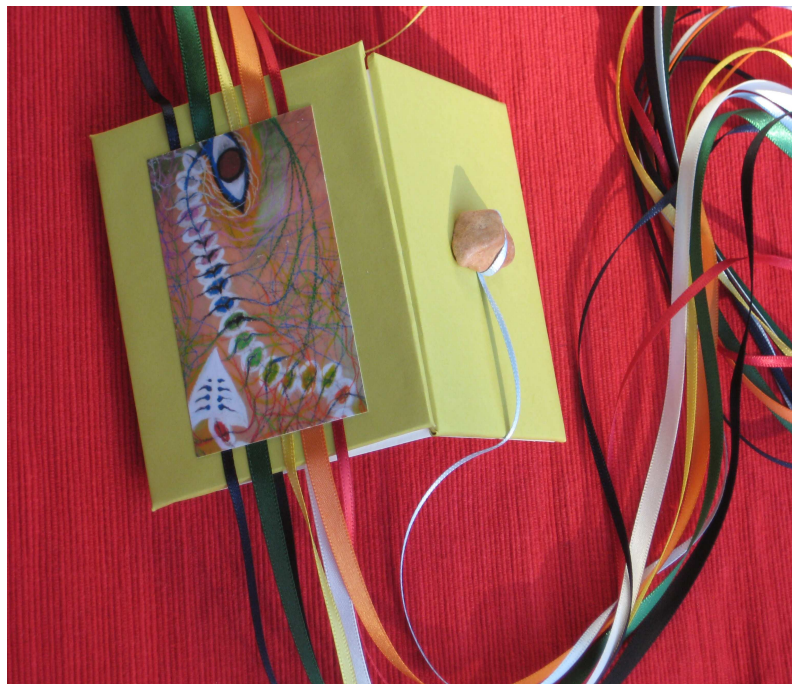
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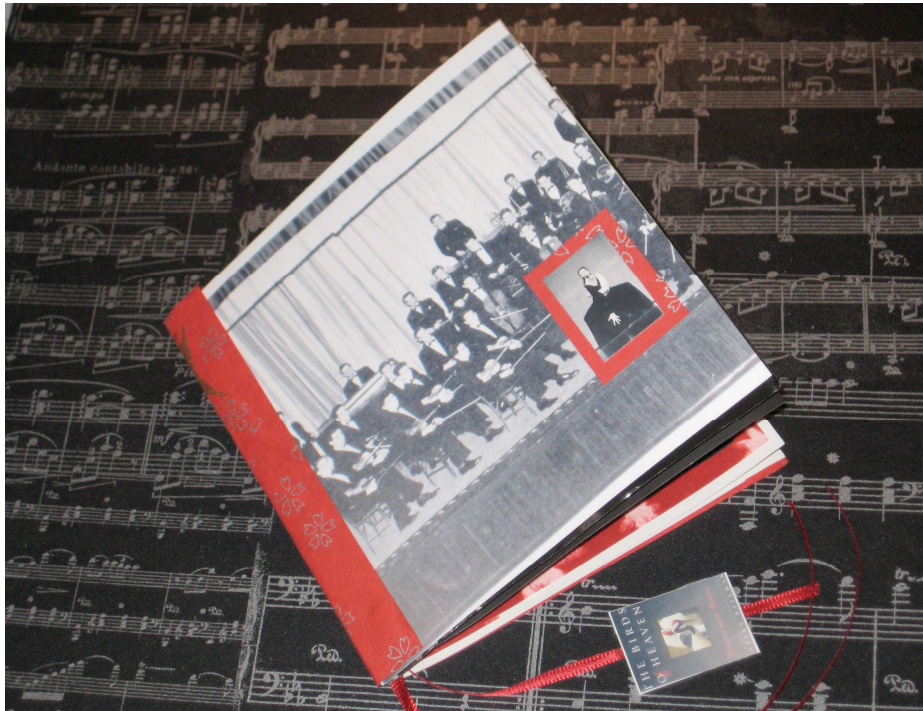
*Stones and Threads*



*Vision*



*Songlines Book*





*Stars In the World*



*Book of Names*



Life Myth House







*Susette Payne*

*Looking For My Father's Face In The Mirror 78*

## CONCLUSION

*Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved. - Søren Kierkegaard*

Learning that certain things cannot be solved has been a life long challenge for me. My tendency is to try to find solutions, but I am grateful to Mindell's work and to the creative process of making art for teaching me the importance of the process itself. I am **the flow of process, which makes patterns as I live and move, and feel through my life.** There is no easy solution to finding my father's face in the mirror – to knowing and being known. There is no way for me to directly access Joseph in consensus reality because he is already dead, just as I cannot talk with Zeb about our relationship now that he is also dead.

And yet I take great comfort in the information and meanings that I discovered in the parallel worlds of dreamland and the sentient realm. I am truly amazed by the patterns in our life that we may not notice but hold extraordinary meaning nonetheless. For me, these patterns - when brought to awareness, unfolded, and expressed through art, writing, or therapy – they are an antidote to meaninglessness, and I discover that I am the meaning. The meaning and importance does not result from proving something, but instead it comes through the experience itself, whether that be a synchronistic event, the creation of a piece of art, or a meditative vector practice of awareness. The “Process Wisdom” that moves me does not do so to solve the mystery, but instead to deepen and know itself in all its infinite paths. I was moved to explore the mystery of my heritage and identity in art because the universe wants to explore itself – something unknown wanted to be known; something lost wanted to be found. It has been a path of awareness back to the mystery of the unbroken wholeness.

The stories and synchronistic experiences that I have shared in this paper are important to me because they point to the ways in which the dreaming earth guides us all to reflect on her mysteries – “it is as if the universe looks through us at her own tail. . . . the universe is a form of awareness, a self-reflecting and sentient being. At some level our awareness and the earth’s are inseparable” (Mindell, 2007, pp. 15-16). Following the numerous signals and synchronicities that surfaced from the universe was both the universe getting to know herself and me getting to know myself. These synchronistic events acted as a mirror in which I could find my father’s face – not only the face of my biological father, Joseph, but also a father bigger than any one person. My reflection now reflects them all – the myth and dreaming of us all -entangled in a complex heritage of knowing and being known in our wholeness, which for me is the essence of love.



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