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SIOP President 1979-1980

I was born in Youngstown, Ohio, October 18, 1929. A few days later the stock market crashed. Some may assume causality; perhaps it was; but I certainly hope this wasn't the case. In any event the great depression changed the course of my life greatly.

My father was an automobile salesman, and my mother was a secretary working for the same Ford dealership as my father. Needless to say, people stopped buying automobiles in the depression and the dealership went bankrupt. Many times in my early years I had trouble understanding what was going on - why we no longer had a maid, why there were "runs" on the banks, what "bootleggers" were.

The only good thing about being born at the beginning of the depression was that I knew no other way of living. When people told me about how life was in the 1920's, I simply could not believe them. I remember that my mother once told me that she and my father would drive the 66 miles to Cleveland for a night's date. I simply could not imagine how anyone could have had the money to buy the gasoline to drive 132 miles. I drive twenty miles each way to work now and think nothing of it but in the depression a distance of twenty miles involved cultures that did not interact in any way.

When I was two, for reasons I have never completely understood, my parents sent me to live with my maternal grandparents and a maiden aunt Alice in Braceville, Ohio, twenty miles from Youngstown. My mother went back to work, as my father tried to survive with various endeavors, such as running a Texaco station. He later sought the security of a police officer’s job, where he remained until he died in 1968.

On the farm we lived in primitive conditions; the only modern convenience we had was electricity. We had no central heating, plumbing, or telephone. Cooking was done on a wood stove in the winter and on a kerosene stove in the summer. Ironing was done with the black irons one now sees at antique dealers. The wash was done with a big wooden washer one agitated by hand. My grandmother even made her own soap. We darned socks until they had thick pads from darning on the heels - how they hurt the feet! A typical evening's activity was listening to WTAM Cleveland on the radio, while my grandmother sat in her rocking chair sewing carpet rags. Alice, after a long day's labor, would read the Warren Tribune Chronicle, which was delivered by mail the day after publication. (It was a penny cheaper if you got it by mail, instead of having the paper boy deliver it). The only magazine we subscribed to was the Farm Journal which, I believe was a nickel a copy.

I had some trouble with reading in my early school years. I would work my way to the best reading group during the school year, then lose their skill over the summer and end up back in the "Bluebirds". Also, reading lessons often had things with which I had no experience. When I was in second grade, Louis Yancey, a classmate whose family was on relief, had to explain to me what 'beefsteak" was.

Alice had left school at the end of the sixth grade to help care for her five brothers and sisters. She could not help me with school work as much as she tried. As I got older, I would walk a mile each way to the Trumbull County Bookmobile during the summer to get things to read. Also I found some classics like Shakespeare's plays among old books my mother and aunts and uncles had had in high school.

I really ended up doing well in school. The school superintendent wanted me to skip grades. There was much family deliberation about that suggestion. I remember Alice worrying that I would graduate from high school too young to get a job clerking in Woolworth's in Warren, Ohio, a town eight miles away.

My mother continued to dictate much about my life. For example, she would not allow me to learn to cook, because she was afraid the kerosene stove would explode and bum my face. However, when I went to visit her about every month or so, I was referred to as "company."

My early relations with peers at school were not always comfortable. I was rejected as the "brain" and "teacher's pet." I countered this with giving the appearance of being naughty without really being naughty at all. My need for appreciation by my peers led to my deliberately answering questions wrong on tests, so that I could say I failed. I still use this feigned naughtiness strategy to some extent today. It stood me well in Braceville. I was not the class valedictorian, but I was the homecoming queen, which was exactly what I wanted.

Religion played a major part in my early life. I was a member of the Braceville Methodist Episcopal Church. I went to Epworth League and sang in the church choir. Although I seldom attend church now, I still have much of the basic value system of the Braceville Methodists. The early upbringing, however, left me terribly naive. I did not learn the "facts of life" until I went to college. Even when I was a junior, I was asking my roommates what the word "masturbation" meant.

Another factor in my early life was the isolation and loneliness. Without a telephone or even a bicycle, the summers were interminable. Often on a sunny afternoon, I would walk a mile to the general store to buy a Klondike. Since we had no refrigeration, ice cream was a real treat, but the most important thing was that I saw people. I was always happy when school started in the fall, because I could be with people again. I could have done much better later as an undergraduate had it not been for my need for constant social activity.

As for feminism, my mother served as a role model for a woman who worked, but more important I really envied the boys their freedom. They could stay out late, for example. I even organized a protest during World War II when the boys were let out of school to pick up potatoes in the fall. This resulted in the girls being allowed to go to the field too. It only took a couple of days of hard work in the field; I fully appreciated the realities of stoop labor and wondered what I had done in insisting on working the fields.

I don't know exactly how I got the idea that I would go to college when I grew up, but I am sure that I had that notion well before third grade. The only college graduates I knew were my teachers and the Merwin girls, whom Alice had helped rear when she had been a domestic for the Merwins. One Merwin sister was a teacher and another was a dietician.

As I look back on my formative years in Braceville, I have mixed feelings. I was inundated in love from Alice and my grandparents, but it was love that left me helpless. One of the biggest sins in the household was raising one's voice in anger at another family member. This left me defenseless when I was attacked by another person. I always turned the other cheek. To this day, I am extraordinarily sensitive to criticism and really have never learned the techniques of defending myself in an oral encounter.

I learned to hate the hypocrisy in Braceville. I remember how an evangelical preacher went home after the Sunday service and shot his neighbor's dog. I hated the intolerance of the W.C.T.U. wing of the church. I remember when young Reverend Hibbard had group folk dancing for the youth after the Sunday evening meeting. He was paid back for his trying to relate to the youth by an attempt by the right wing of the congregation to have him fired for teaching the young people how to "jitterbug." I myself became the victim of the false accusations of the right wing before I left Braceville, and I still react strongly to a false accusation.

Most of all, I think the thing I regret most about my upbringing is that I never really learned to take responsibility. My keen sense of duty had to be developed much later. On the other hand I did learn that the last thing you wanted to do is go on "relief."

When I left Braceville in 1947, I already had some disconcerting thoughts about self sacrifice. Alice had no way to support herself since she had devoted her life first to caring for her brothers and sisters, then me, and then my grandparents. She was dearly beloved by the whole community, and when she really needed help, it was only the community and I who supported her. Certainly early in life, I had a strong

sense of the need to be economically self-sufficient. This early experience, I believe accounted for much of my career orientation.

My mother agreed to send me to college. Since I had to go to a state school, I chose Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. It was hard to get into any university in those days as the veterans of World War II had come back armed with the GI Bill and most colleges had trouble handling the volume. I started as a chemistry major, pursuing an interest in science I had developed in my ninth grade science class. I loved the class work of chemistry, but I was a disaster in the laboratory. I was constantly spilling things and blowing up things. In my junior year I switched to psychology as a major. I found the courses interesting. I was particularly interested in the testing and experimental courses. I rejected clinical psychology, because in one course I had to give the Thematic Apperception Test for purposes of gaining familiarity with projective tests. I could not ascertain the rationale for the scoring and really became upset. I felt a strong need to get back to more fact-based psychology.

Except for one summer, when I was a nurse's aide on the swing shift in a hospital, I went to summer school and graduated with a B.A. in psychology in February, 1951. At that point, I had to decide what to do. I considered a market research job with Proctor and Gamble and a buying trainee job with an Ohio department store. There were few job choices open to women in 1951. The job most of my friends took was teacher or service representative for the telephone company. I had enough self-confidence that I felt I could do better. Medicine was not acceptable as a career, as my summer in a hospital had taught me that I was not tough enough to accept the patients' expiring. I had similar feelings about clinical psychology. In studying abnormal psychology, we had clinics at the Athens Mental Hospital. I could never eat dinner after seeing the plight of the patients. Chemistry was not a good field; physics was out because I am deficient in space visualization, and office work was eliminated from consideration because I have ten thumbs and type poorly.

I finally decided to get a master's degree in psychology, and I moved out of the Sigma Kappa house where I had lived for two years, left my dear friends behind, and moved to an isolated rooming house. Regardless of how dear my friendships were in the sorority, I knew I had to spend more time studying and could not accomplish this effort in the midst of campaigns for prom queen and the like. I really had appreciated the sorority, as in addition to friends it gave me more social self-confidence and helped me overcome my shyness.

When I decided to get a master's degree, I became permanently more socially aloof and concentrated more on my career than on social activities. I still dated quite a bit, but essentially quit the things like bridge games with the girls. I did much better in my graduate work than I did as an undergraduate. I tied for number of answers correct on my qualifying examinations and had my master’s degree when I was still 21. One of the things I did not understand until later was how easy that University was; now I feel that I was ill served by the University's not holding its students to higher standards. I got little encouragement from my professors. In fact they always were surprised when I did a good experiment and wrote it up well. Despite the fact that I did so well in my class work and talked about going on for a Ph.D., my professors would make remarks like, "you don't want to be a Ph.D. Female Ph.Ds are a dull lot." My fellow graduate students, who were mostly male, also discouraged me with similar comments.

After I finished my master's degree in August of 1951, I felt ill prepared to face the world and took a job as a psychometrist in the testing and counseling bureau there at the University. I also had a job as a housemother for my sorority. This provided me room and board. I began to think seriously about student personnel work, but really wondered whether I wanted to spend the rest of my life counseling young girls and monitoring student life standards.

I found out that a previous Ohio University graduate headed a test development and research organization at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, near Dayton, Ohio. With the help of my professors, I obtained a job there. I superficially understood there was sex discrimination, but I never could accept discrimination; somehow I pretended it didn't exist, but in the Air Force office, I felt the first major pain of discrimination. A man who had been in school with me was hired a few months after I was, but in a higher

level job. He was one of the nicest men I had ever met, but was an object of pity of the other students because his school performance was so poor. The hurt of his being hired in a higher level job when he had no master's (and to my knowledge never obtained one) and did not have to take a written examination for employment, whereas I who had a master's had to take a test for a lower level job greatly affected me.

Another effect work in civil service had on me was a lasting distaste for bureaucracy and work rules and regulations. Also, civil service engendered bad work habits in me. I have noted this in others who have been too long in civil service, and I would advise youngsters that civil service is a good place to start and get some experience, but it is not a place to stay for any long period of time.

Dayton wrought, however, more important changes in my life. It was there I met a young lieutenant who later became my husband. He was an usher in the church I attended, and we were introduced by an old college friend. My office moved to Mitchell Field in Hempstead, New York, and when he was discharged, he, a native New Yorker, joined the engineering department of an aerospace company in nearby New England.

I spent a total of about three years with the Air Force, most of it in New York, which was a cultural shock. As I look back now, I think it was brave for a small town Ohio girl to go to New York and live alone, but frankly I was more naive than brave. I took some courses at Columbia at night and had definitely decided that it was either marriage or a Ph.D. I was determined not to be the kind of woman who neglects her family in favor of a career.

I also became less enchanted with psychology in New York; the problem was more the psychologists than psychology. As one of my coworkers said later, I was like a kid from a convent dropped among hard hitting New Yorkers.

My husband, Joseph Tenopyr, and I were married in October of 1955 and drove to California where he was to take an engineering job in a chemical company. I still wasn't sure I wanted to continue in psychology, but I took tests for local civil service organizations. When a job offer came, I refused it and started answering advertisements in the newspapers. I became an industrial psychologist, interestingly enough, partly because of sex discrimination. I applied at the employment office of North American Aviation, Inc. The job I was seeking was that of statistician. The male receptionist refused even to offer me an application because, "they want a man for that job." As I was walking away with tears in my eyes, he finally asked what I had done in my last job, and I told him I had written job knowledge tests. He called me back and said he had a job where they "may take a woman." I filled out an application blank and had an interview immediately. Dr. William Calvert, who interviewed me, explained that the job was the head of employment testing and that the company did not want to make much of testing; if they did they would hire an expert and pay him $10,000 a year. I was eventually hired in May, 1956 for $5,400 a year.

I wonder how many women even now are hired because they are expected to be weak, but are never told this.

I found business another cultural shock. When I started I had no staff, but was expected to do research. I counted black marks showing through holes in stencils, carried armloads of mimeographed papers the length of the factory, and did other manual work that I had, in fact, not been allowed to do in civil service, as a job analyst might see me and lower my job grade. Even after 14 years, I had only a secretary and a bachelor's degree person to help me. The lack of support in the company, I have found, is generally the same today in most businesses.

My years at North American, later Rockwell International, were spent without any ability to do really meaningful research. I did lots of little studies and wrote little tests. Because I was the only psychologist, I became involved in all aspects of the personnel operations. At one time I spent a year doing generalist work. I have learned to value the breadth of experience I had there.

I met some of the finest people I have ever known, while I was working in that company; I also met some of the worst. The political intrigue in that company was something I tried to avoid, but eventually I got disastrously caught up in it.

Fortunately the company had a tuition reimbursement plan. I started taking graduate courses at the University of Southern about 1958. I studied harder than I have ever studied before and with a singleness of purpose. For example, for six years I did not polish my nails, because I couldn't afford the time. I took nine class hours a semester, worked about 30 hours a week and was graduated in 1966 with a Ph.D. with specialty in psychological measurement. My self-esteem, because of events at work had fallen so low that I felt I needed to be perfect. If I missed more than one or two questions on a long examination, I would go into a deep depression. I was really the class neurotic and needed the constant support, in particular of J. P. Guilford and William B. Michael, my professors. However, the over-learning I did has really helped me to retain my skills and add new ones. Fear of obsolescence has haunted me and throughout my career, I have undertaken many self-development activities, such as promising to give a speech in an area in which I needed to get up to date.

After I was graduated, I started to teach at night in the local universities. The need to maintain my technical skills drove me, but having achieved some degree of technical proficiency, the thing I needed most was to get over my fear of standing up before an audience. Despite the fact that I am a frequent public speaker, I have never quite found the key to 100% effective speaking. In a particularly threatening situation I may revert back to my old terror and try to cover it up by telling bad jokes.

After the company decided to stop testing, I was declared surplus and immediately went to the research faculty of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California at Los Angeles. The position was temporary and I had no real intention of staying long, but an academic career became tempting, particularly because I was successful in bringing in government funds. I could have stayed, however, the climate on campuses in those days was not to my liking - the Viet Cong birthday parties, the "Save Angela Davis" sit down strikes. Also, after experiencing the cyclical nature of the aerospace industry, I wanted roots and security. Consequently I accepted a job at the U.S. Civil Service Commission in Washington, D.C. I knew and admired some of the people there and I felt that the climate was better there for a woman than in private industry. Perhaps it was just the fact that I was to be allowed in the Executive Dining Room - a place from which women were excluded at Rockwell.

One thing that the Civil Service Commission gave me was first-hand experience in civil rights litigation; I might have stayed, but a change of management and being forced to try to be productive when I was getting up in the wee hours of the morning just to keep up, left me physically and emotionally exhausted. Also, I was reminded again about all of the things I disliked about the government bureaucracy. Consequently, when an offer came from AT&T in 1972, I accepted it. I started alone in charge of non-management selection and now have a staff of twelve and responsibility for both management and nonmanagement selection.

Life has not always been smooth at AT&T, but the company has afforded me many opportunities to hone my skills and influence the course of industrial psychology in the nation. Trying to do my small part to help the company change from a regulated monopoly into a global competitor has been a real challenge. Trying to maintain a quality operation and survive has been problematic, but my conviction that what I am doing is right, both for the company and for society, has carried me through. The opportunity and support given me by AT&T to pursue professional matters has been invaluable. Working my way up the ladder to the presidency of Division 14 would have been difficult without this support.

As president, my main concern was professional affairs and countering the efforts of the health care providers to regiment us in their image. A minor accomplishment was helping to bring the Workshop Committee back into the fold.

In many ways, high positions in Division 14 have enabled me to provide leadership in the various battles to prevent regulation of personnel selection psychology out of existence. Through a period of years, starting about 1973 and ending in 1978, with the Ad Hoc Industry Group on Employee Selection Guidelines, I met regularly with government officials attempting to get selection guidelines with which we could live. These years of effort resulted in the 1978 Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures. Although we did not get everything we wanted, we at least got guidelines a quantum leap better than they would have been had we not been active in their writing.

I am particularly proud of the way the division. *Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures* have come to be recognized - I was on the writing committee for all three versions.

The battles over the *APA Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* published in 1985 rivaled those over government guidelines. Fortunately, the Division 14 council Representatives, of which I was one, were able to exert considerable influence.

At this writing, we find members of the U.S. Congress trying to force employers into employment quota systems. The battleground is new, but many of the issues are the same, and we continue to attempt to influence the outcome of legislation.

Some have asked what accomplishment I take the most pride in - I would have to say that it is building up my organization at AT&T. In fact, in taking stock, I would have to say that my life's work belongs to AT&T. I have a highly competent staff devoted to both excellence and quality service to clients. I take great comfort that AT&T is far more competitive because of our efforts. Our staff has not been the most publicly noted by the profession, but it has been one that endures and serves as a center of excellence. I only hope that we maintain our record of accomplishment and survive the possible onset of onerous legislation.

I have always had a firm belief that testing and selection work is one of the most valuable services that a psychologist can perform for business. I feel that now, the work has become more important because of the failure of the educational system and the need to keep the country competitive in a global economy.

The firm belief that what I am doing is right has dictated many of my actions during my career. I have tirelessly resisted punitive legislation and regulation that would undermine sound psychology. I have done battle with the slick consultants who would sell the psychological equivalent of snake oil to unwitting personnel managers.

One thing that is particularly disturbing to me is that the field of human resources has not appeared to develop much beyond the level of the 1960's. I have heartily supported the efforts of the Society for Human Resource Management to professionalize personnel. However, I find that many personnel officials are still naive about how they can get the best from their human resources. One finds them buying into every fad that comes along or doing things the same old way, regardless of the need for change. This is accompanied by a general lack of respect for the human resources field and the use of personnel jobs as a holding ground for failures. This makes life very difficult for a competent psychologist in business. Often one is faced with supervision by persons who know nothing at all about psychology and have no comprehension of the quality of psychological work necessary and the resources needed. At Rockwell at least it was understood that psychological work is professional work; I find many personnel people lack this insight, and I see the competent and ethical psychologists leaving business.

At the same time I see an ever widening gap between the psychologists in academia and those in business. Should this keep on, I am afraid that we shall see the universities only educating people to take other academic jobs. This appears to be now signaling the potential demise of industrial psychology.

I cannot live without further goals for which to strive. Honors and high offices give only transitory satisfaction. Winning battles with those who would do away with industrial psychology either for broad

political purposes or because of naivete or jealousy is not entirely rewarding as there will always be adversaries; over the years one group is replaced with yet another. As long as there are gates to the rewards of society, there will always be disliked gate keepers, and a society without gates is no society at all. Professionals in psychology will always be misunderstood as long as American business fails to learn about people and continues to look for glamorous quick fixes to its personnel problems.

The goals I have set now are to try to foster more professionalism in personnel functions and the bringing of town and gown together, so that the knowledge of both can be utilized for the good of American society. Certainly this is not going to be an effort without pain - to me and to others - but pain can be used constructively to lead to meaningful accomplishment. My life proves it.

Reflections on the Role of Women in Industrial Psychology
Mary L. Tenopyr
AT & T