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## Benjamin Spock: A Two-Century Man

Betty Caldwell

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# Benjamin Spock: A Two-Century Man

BY BETTYE CALDWELL

*On 21 September 1996, on the Syracuse University campus, Professor Caldwell gave the keynote address at "Choices for Children and Families: A Symposium Honoring Benjamin Spock." The symposium, which was sponsored by Syracuse University Library Associates and the College for Human Development, also celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Baby and Child Care* and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Bernice Wright Nursery School at Syracuse University. The symposium was funded by Johnson & Johnson, Inc., the New York State Department of Education Early Childhood Services, The Consortium for Children's Services, and Success By 6.*

IT WAS a great honor for me to be invited to give the keynote talk at this symposium honoring Benjamin Spock and celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Baby and Child Care*. I am delighted to have this chance to pay homage to a man who has done so much for children and parents everywhere and who has awarded his friendship freely to those fortunate enough to have come into his orbit. Ben Spock the human being is a unique gestalt—that is, his total legacy is more than the sum of his clinical care, his writings, his teaching, and his demonstrations. He is one of those rare human beings whose life adds up to more than 100 percent.

Before offering my comments about Ben as part of today's celebration, I have to clarify for you the fact that I do not claim to be a close friend of Ben Spock and Mary Morgan, but I do claim to be a friend. (I think Ben and Mary would describe the situation in the same way.) Mary Morgan used to tell people that I introduced them and brought them together, but that is a bit of an exaggeration. However, because I know how much they mean to one another, I am happy to take credit even if I don't deserve it. I helped arrange for Ben to give a talk at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, where I was on the faculty. Mary Morgan heard Ben's talk and

Bettye Caldwell is professor of pediatrics, child development, and education at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. From 1966 to 1969 she was professor of child development in Syracuse University's Department of Child and Family Studies and director of the Children's Center. Her research helped provide the foundation for Head Start. Since 1951 Caldwell has had more than 200 publications.

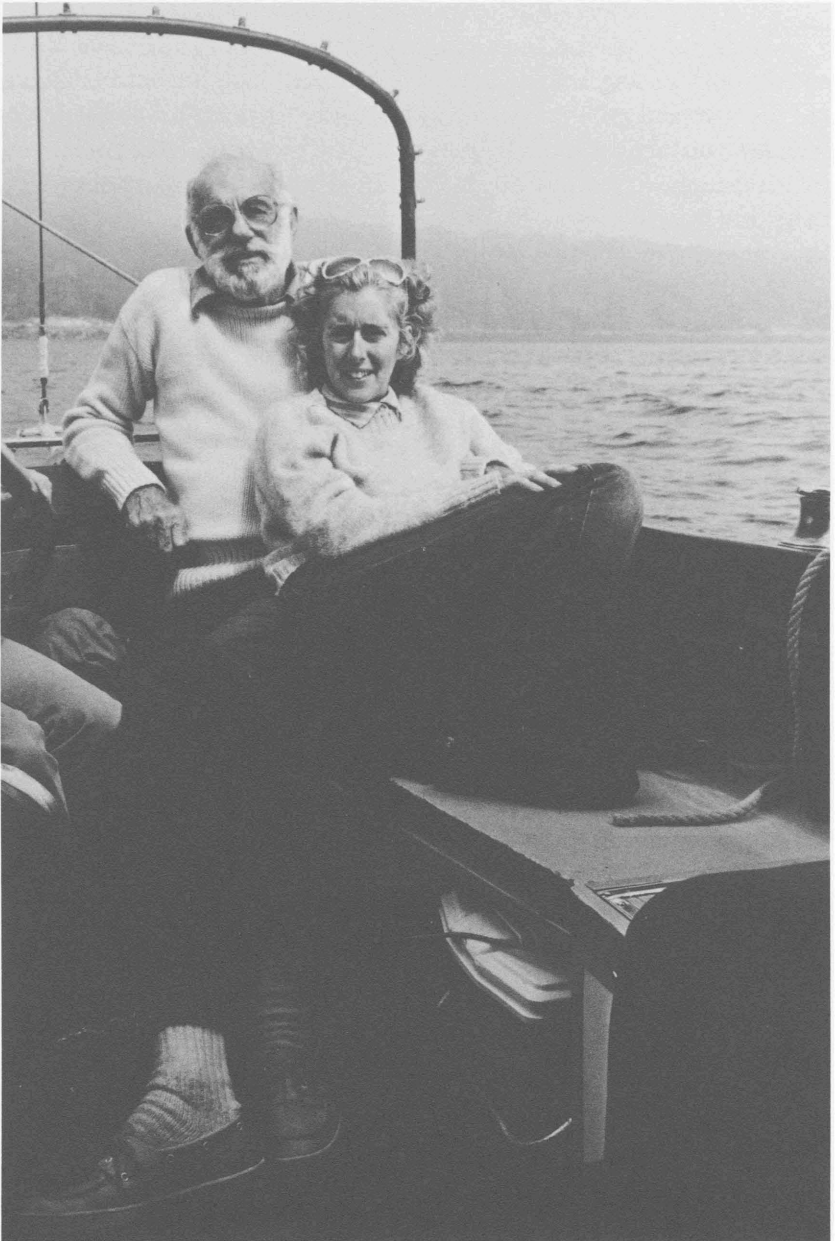
met him briefly at that time. He described her reaction as follows: “She was not too impressed with the talk . . . but . . . she was impressed by how well I’d handled the questions—and also by how large my hands were. This was the only time I ever made an impression based on the size of my hands.”<sup>1</sup> That was the only role I played. They met again in San Francisco a few months later and, as we say, the rest is history. Later I will have more to say about their relationship.

A few years after their marriage in 1976, they invited my husband and me to sail with them for a week in the Virgin Islands on their lovely little sloop, the Carapace. We did this in 1979. For me, having held Ben Spock in awe for years, the invitation itself was thrilling. In addition I have always had an almost mystical reverence for the ocean, which offered promise that the week would be unforgettable. And it was. Two experts taught me to snorkel, to avoid the fire coral, to pay little attention to the barracuda that always rested alongside the keel, and to get out of the water when my hands looked like dried prunes. I was also exposed to the practice of meditation—which I still have not mastered—for the very first time, as Ben and Mary were just beginning that routine. Every day Ben pulled away from everyone for an hour or so to sit at the table in the little galley and write, pencil to tablet, a magazine article or part of a book he happened to be working on. Forget about the torpor of the tropics; when you have the work ethic, you work regardless of distractions.

I mention the intermittence of our acquaintance to establish the limitations of my knowledge about Ben. In my youth I admired him from afar; as a young mother I profited from his wisdom; I have attended every speech he has given in a city in which I happened to be living or visiting; I have followed his career of political and social advocacy with admiration; and I have read most of his books (and even some of his articles for *Redbook* magazine). But I would be misleading you if I implied that I could give you an insider’s view of Ben Spock. I hope you will keep this disclaimer in mind as I now proceed to review some of the features of this man’s life that should make Syracuse University rejoice in the coup of having his papers.<sup>2</sup>

1. Benjamin M. Spock and Mary Morgan, *Spock on Spock: A Memoir of Growing Up with the Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 222.

2. In the 1960s Syracuse University Library asked Benjamin Spock for his papers, which have arrived in installments over the years. The collection, if one lined up the boxes, is almost as long as a football field; it contains correspondence, medical reference files, memorabilia, Spock’s writings and publications, newspaper clippings, photographs, films, tapes, and—surprising for an antiwar activist—posters related to the two world wars. *Ed.*



Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan on their sailboat in Rockport Harbor, Maine.  
Photograph by Mark Wallack.

In *A Better World for Our Children* Ben says that he has had four careers: a practicing pediatrician (including the writing of *Baby and Child Care*), an educator, a social activist, and a family man.<sup>3</sup> I am going to combine the first two and group my remarks into three sections: his pediatric career, his social activism, and his personal life. This division will not be easy to maintain, however. Individuals who are whole persons live holistically: their professional careers blend with activism, and their belief systems affect their personal relationships, and vice versa.

#### PEDIATRIC CAREER

If it were possible to separate Ben Spock's pediatric career from *Baby and Child Care* (which no one would want to do), that career might have appeared somewhat undistinguished in the world of haute academe. He can't boast a CV listing 200 research publications in peer-reviewed journals. Instead he can mention (and he would do so humbly) that he wrote one that has sold 43 million copies!

There have been many analyses of how changes in *Baby and Child Care* have reflected societal trends over a fifty-year period. It is important to acknowledge these changes because they offer proof of one of the traits that has made Ben a great pediatrician and a great author: he can change. There is no way the book could have continued to be popular if he had not been able to change. The famous opening statement—"Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do."—retains its powerful impact. Ben wanted mothers to feel that they knew how to take care of a baby and not be overwhelmed by the advice given by "experts." Of course there is a paradox in beginning a manual of child care with that statement and then proceeding to offer a 500-page template covering everything from feeding to manners. In several of his books Ben has mentioned his disappointment upon learning from some of the many mothers who wrote to him that his first edition (which stressed the positive behavior potential to be found in most babies) had increased, rather than decreased, their anxiety and had made them feel ineffective if they tried what he recommended and it hadn't worked. So, as Ann Hulbert indicated, the second edition, which came out ten years after the first, was "parent-focused" instead of "child-centered."<sup>4</sup>

Of course, another change—often commented on—occurred after Ben

3. Benjamin Spock, *A Better World for Our Children: Rebuilding American Family Values* (Bethesda, Md.: National Press Books, 1994).

4. Ann Hulbert, "Dr. Spock's Baby," *New Yorker* (20 May 1996), 87.



encountered feminist ire about the tone of the book. Not only was the pronoun used for baby always “he” (unless an example referred to a girl), but there was almost no recognition of trends toward maternal employment already detectable in the late 1940s and the need for guidance attuned to that reality. I love Ben’s comment on his sexism in the early editions: “I was no more sexist than the average man, I think, but since I’d written down so much, the feminists were able to put their finger on it.”<sup>5</sup>

In the same volume he relates that Gloria Steinem “thundered in the tones of Jehovah, ‘Dr. Spock, I hope you realize you have been a major oppressor of women in the same category as Sigmund Freud’” (p. 247). That was in 1972, but later he was pleased when *Ms.* magazine named him one of the heroes of the women’s movement in a ceremony honoring the magazine’s tenth anniversary. He comments wryly, however, that his wife still has some doubts about that!

Personally I see the major changes in *Baby and Child Care* as a move from micro- to macroissues. In an era of disposable diapers and laundry equipment, toilet training is almost a nonissue. Ditto for feeding. Now Ben is much more concerned, as we all are, about family breakup, about anomie in our adolescents, lack of respect shown parents and other adults, violence, hypermaterialism, and the dearth of spiritual values in our society.

In *A Better World for Our Children* he makes a profound comment about at least one reason why our society has “misplaced its values and lost its bearings.”

The gradual acceptance of humanity’s having a less exalted place in the overall scheme of things has, I believe, had a profound and depressing effect. It has deflated our spirits, but so slowly that most of [us] do not recognize how or when it happened. (p. 99)

The other two reasons he cites are (1) the omission from the behavior sciences of what used to be called the soul, and (2) our continued protest against the artificiality of the nineteenth-century Victorian period with its rigid stylistic and moral precepts.

With respect to the last of these causes, he offers an explanation of several modern trends that many of us have observed with consternation:

It seems to me that in our degrading language, our tattered clothes, our emphasis on the physical aspects of sexuality we are

5. *Spock on Spock*, 247.

still, after a hundred years, rebelling against the pomposity and stuffy propriety of our Victorian ancestors. (p. 100)

Ben goes on to write what I consider to be one of the most beautiful and poetic statements to be found anywhere in his writings:

As powerful as these reasons are, however, I believe we can and should challenge them. Unless a substantial proportion of people hold to positive standards, beliefs and ideals, a society begins to come apart at the seams. We are seeing it happen: materialism unchecked by idealism leads to oppression of the powerless by the greedy; excessive competitiveness hardens hearts even within families; tolerance of violence unleashes all sorts of brutality; acceptance of instability in marriage encourages ever greater instability; the absence of values in children leads to a generation of cynical, self-centered adults.

I believe that spiritual values and idealism—within or without organized religion—are as real and as powerful as the physical and intellectual attributes of human being[s]. (pp. 100–1)

He then ends this section with a beautiful manifesto, which it would behoove all of us to adopt:

I believe that we can give our children standards to live by and keep them from cynically accepting amorality and immorality, even though much of society as a whole may be corrupt and cynical. (p. 101)

But enough of my own critique of Ben Spock as a pediatrician and educator. Clearly I have focused more on what he taught, and still teaches, parents. To do justice to Ben's pediatric career, I thought it important to call on some of the country's outstanding pediatricians—all of them concerned with blending pediatrics with child development—to comment on Ben's contribution. On pages 12–13 there is a montage of their statements, sent to me to be used on this occasion. These statements convey better than I could what Ben Spock has meant to pediatrics. And they provide a smooth transition into a discussion of Ben's social activism, as each of them referred to his courage in standing up for his convictions whenever national practices ran counter to his conscience.

#### SPOCK THE ACTIVIST

*Baby and Child Care* made Ben famous for the twentieth century. His so-

cial activism made him a man for the twenty-first—and beyond. In *Spock on Spock* he wrote:

I got into the antiwar movement in several unplanned steps. If I'd had any idea where it was leading me, I might have paused, though I doubt that my conscience would have let me stop altogether. (p. 167)

Quite by chance, a few days before this trip to Syracuse, I happened to see a line penned by Martin Luther and was struck by the essential similarity of what Luther wrote to Ben Spock's above statement. Although the two reformations (or should I say "revolutions"?) were separated by four centuries, and though one was theistic and the other humanistic, their descriptions of their own patterns of action are almost identical. Luther wrote:

God does not guide me. He pushes me forward. He carries me away. I am not master of myself. I desire to live in repose; but I am thrown into the midst of tumults and revolutions.<sup>6</sup>

I found myself wondering whether every person who begins a "movement" or joins one very early in the parade, feels this way. It appears quite likely.

But back to Ben Spock. Convinced that, if we did not adopt a nuclear test ban treaty, more children all over the world would die of cancer and leukemia or be damaged by radiation fallout, he joined the board of SANE (National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy) in 1962. In April 1962 SANE ran a full-page ad in the *New York Times* captioned "Dr. Spock is worried." There was no other name that could have been so effective in that context. Ben was allowed to write the message underneath; erasing and rewriting feverishly, he produced some 3,000 words—which the advertising firm insisted he reduce to 200. The message ended up as a simple plea to save the world from self-destruction. That ad was one of the most powerful statements ever made against nuclear proliferation and environmental destruction.

It was an easy glissando from involvement in SANE to participation in other disarmament groups. Ben's involvement seemed to catch the medical establishment and the politically correct in-group off guard. Here was a man who wrote his first political endorsement for Adlai Stevenson

6. J.H.M. D'Aubigne, *History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Carter, 1844).

Benjamin Spock changed the lives of parents, children, and family caregivers. By his groundbreaking book and his sensitivity to parents' concerned passions, he made it fashionable to begin to understand the child as a person, to understand parents as bringing "ghosts from their own nurseries," not to harm the child but because of their own passionate involvement. He led us all to the wealth of information about parenting and child development which we have today.

T. Berry Brazelton

Ben Spock taught us, by example, that if you have the courage to express your humanity, your humanity will fortify your courage. Whether campaigning to convince parents to trust their capacity to know and to love, or to persuade the medical profession to exercise the therapeutic advantage of relationship-centered care, or to implore government to insure our national security by persevering peace, respecting work, celebrating diversity, and valuing families, he showed us all the fine distinction between service and caring. In thanks, we live with more hope and better purpose.

Peter A. Gorski, M.D., M.P.A.

During the 1960s Dr. Spock provided insight and guidance in child rearing to most American families and practicing pediatricians. Perhaps just as important, Dr. Spock established the concept that "parenting" was a skill that, while not necessarily inherent, could be learned—thus relieving the anxiety of thousands of young mothers and fathers.

Betty Lowe, M.D.

Benjamin Spock's contribution to child care practices in the United States in the last half of the twentieth century has been preeminent. Through an unequalled ability to provide authoritative and wise guidance to both parents and professionals, Spock dramatically transformed the culture of child rearing in this country. All those who care for children are heavily indebted to him for his leadership, unwavering courage, and a lifetime devoted to the best interests of children and their families.

Morris Green, M.D.



Ben Spock's greatest legacy is the help he has given to generations of families to rear their children with humanity, decency, and sensitivity. This reflects the range of his interest from the development of each individual child to the fate of children and families all over the world.

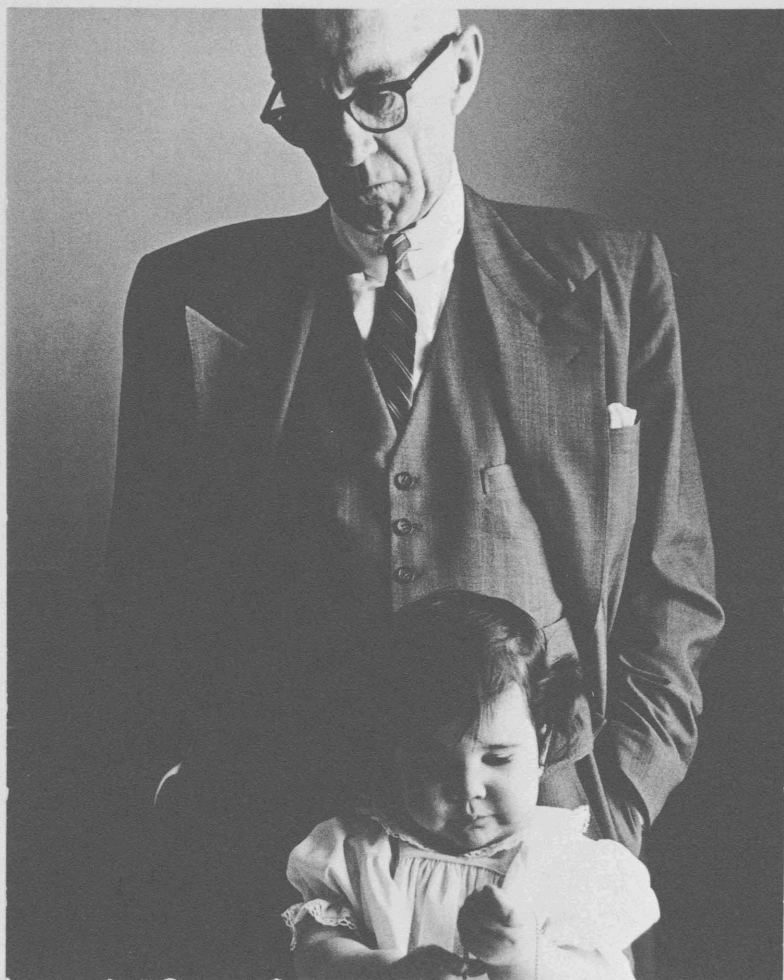
In the process, Ben Spock has served as a model for pediatricians to emulate—particularly when the changes he proposed were not popular. But emulate him we did and in the process his ideas and practices have become part of the mainstream of pediatrics. This took imagination, vision, and courage with which he has been abundantly endowed.

Most importantly, he taught us how to go beyond the four walls of our offices and to communicate our knowledge of child care to people in communities all over the world.

Julius B. Richmond, M.D.

My congratulations to Ben Spock, the wisest and most effective advocate for children and parents throughout the twentieth century, who brought the best of pediatric, psychologic, and psychoanalytic information to parents in clear, enjoyable, straightforward language. And he has continued this effort throughout the last fifty years. With great admiration and affection, to a wonderful friend and superb mentor, congratulations on the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Baby and Child Care*.  
John Kennell, M.D.

I carried Dr. Benjamin Spock's book, *Baby and Child Care*, in my pocket as a pediatric intern. It was the only source of practical information to answer mothers' questions about their babies. Later, we raised our children by it.  
Robert J. Haggerty, M.D.



**Dr. Spock is worried.**

In April 1962 SANE placed this full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*. It was accompanied by a 200-word message from Dr. Spock urging the adoption of a nuclear test ban treaty. Photograph courtesy of Syracuse University Library.

(mainly because Stevenson was such a strong supporter of education), who had made a political commercial for John F. Kennedy and attended state dinners at the White House, taking a public stand counter to a government position and appearing at rallies with disheveled and unruly students—wearing a three-piece suit with a watch chain across the vest!

In 1964 Ben supported and campaigned for Lyndon Johnson because he had said that he would not “send American boys to fight in an Asian war.” When, just three months after his election, Johnson began to escalate the war, Ben wrote indignant protests. Johnson did not reply, although immediately after his election he had called Ben at Western Reserve to thank him for his support. Instead, Ben heard from McGeorge Bundy, who replied as follows:

Dear Doctor, you may be assured that we have considered the point of view that you express, and we feel that it has no validity whatsoever.<sup>7</sup>

From that time forward Ben was a much-sought-after speaker against the Vietnam War, appearing frequently in picket lines and protest marches.

Ben writes that people seem to think he constantly committed civil disobedience, but that, over twenty-five years, it averaged out to about once every two years (twelve identifiable acts). The climax of his social activism of this period was his indictment, along with four others (the Reverend William Sloan Coffin, Marcus Raskin, Mitchell Goodman, and Michael Ferber) for treason on grounds that the group had encouraged resistance to the draft, the burning of draft cards, and emigration to Canada to avoid service in the war. After a widely publicized trial, Raskin was acquitted, but Ben and the other three were found guilty; they were sentenced to two years in jail and fined \$5,000 each. A year later the Court of Appeals overturned Spock’s conviction “because of lack of evidence of guilt.” It was a sordid episode in American justice. Ben commented on people’s reaction to these events as follows:

I had no idea when I joined SANE in 1962 that this would lead me to becoming a spokesman for an antiwar movement, to civil disobedience, and to indictment for a federal crime. First I had supported an antiwar candidate for the presidency. Then we were betrayed by him. Next he had me and four others indicted for what I would call just telling the truth to the American people. I

7. Quoted in *Spock on Spock*, 175.

never thought of myself as a traitor; I felt that my position was more moral than the government's. But it did make me unhappy to have many people turn against me.<sup>8</sup>

One final act of social courage shown by Ben Spock was his willingness to run for president in 1972 as the candidate of the People's Party. Aware of the total lack of success that third-party candidates have had in this country since we became locked into a two-party system, Ben probably knew that it was an exercise in futility—but something that had to be done nevertheless. The party had been founded the year before on a platform that should have had strong appeal for many voters: progressive disarmament, withdrawal from the fighting in Vietnam, opposition to property and sales taxes, a negative income tax, free university education for all students who needed it, local political control, equal opportunity for women and minorities—and other good things. Ben had to pay most of his own travel expenses. He wrote that the greatest frustration was to give his usual campaign speech, to note the people in the audience who nodded in agreement with the principles, who might come up afterward and say that they wouldn't vote for him because they didn't want to lose their vote! The party got 79,000 votes in the ten states where it was on the ballot—not a bad showing when you consider the troubled state of America's political soul during that area. The campaign, run when Ben was sixty-nine years old, was his last highly publicized political statement. But it was by no means his last effort to shape policy in America. Though less often a soloist during the past two decades, he has nonetheless continued to speak out for those causes to which he is committed.

The personal and professional consequences appear not to have daunted him in the least. In *Spock on Spock* he relates an anecdote about his pain during World War I at having to wear a suit which, because of the wool shortage, had been made from one of his father's castoffs. His mother upbraided him for his protests, telling him: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, worrying what people will think of you. All you have to know is that you are *right!*" (p. 57). That lesson must have registered indelibly. Throughout his career as a social activist, Ben Spock must have been sustained by the conviction that, in whatever he was doing, he was right. Certainly he helped persuade many others to abandon the safety of either doing nothing or taking the politically safe position. A comment I received about Ben from one of his pediatric colleagues, Dr. Robert Haggerty, expresses this beautifully:

8. Quoted in *Spock on Spock*, 201.



Ben Spock's unswerving opposition to the Vietnam War, and his willingness to sacrifice himself to end this, gave me the moral courage to oppose it. I marched with him and others in Cleveland in the late 1960s to protest U.S. participation.<sup>9</sup>

Many people drew their strength to oppose—at least by letter if not at the barricades—from Ben's courage. It marked him for all time as a man to whom right meant more than status and acceptance.

#### PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

I got to know Ben Spock personally only during the Mary Morgan era, so my comments will be limited primarily to those years and what I think they mean to Ben. I never knew his first wife, Jane, though I have friends who knew her—all of whom spoke very positively of her, and I have never met either of Ben's sons or his grandchildren. I have heard stories about Jane's feelings that she did not get enough credit for her work on *Baby and Child Care*. But this I know: I have never heard Ben say anything but appreciative words about her. A quick glance at the dedication to Jane of the fortieth-anniversary edition of *Baby and Child Care* in 1985, bears testimony to his continued appreciation. As it is very long, I have shortened it slightly:

##### *To Jane*

In the first of the three years it took to write this book in the 1940s, Jane typed the original draft of the manuscript from my slow, slow dictation, from 9 p.m. when we finished dinner (after a full day of practice) until 1 a.m. She figured out such details as how many diapers, sheets, pads, nighties, shirts, bottles, and nipples should be recommended. She tested the various ways to prepare formulas, to make sure they worked.

When it became apparent that the job would never be done if we continued our social life, she suggested we give it up immediately—a real deprivation.

In the second year of writing, when I was in the Navy . . . and couldn't get off duty in the daytime, Jane held consultations with specialists and publishers.

In the third year, when I was transferred to California . . . it was Jane who spent hundreds of hours on the last-minute revisions and indexing. She took down the changes I spelled out over the

9. Haggerty to Caldwell, personal correspondence, 12 September 1996.

long-distance phone at 2 a.m. . . . and later in the morning rushed them to the publisher. She was endlessly resourceful. Her advice was always practical and wise. The book couldn't have been what it is without her.

In this dedication, Ben gave her every credit but coauthorship, which was, according to some who knew her, what she wanted and felt that she deserved. Whatever the procedure for determining authorship (the publishers had sought a single author; dual authorship may have spoiled the "I" style of doctor-parent communication that helped establish the book as a family friend, etc.), the fact that he devotes almost an entire page to spelling out Jane's contribution some ten years after his marriage to another woman says a great deal about Ben's sense of loyalty.

After paying such close attention to the dedication of *Baby and Child Care*, I thought perhaps I should check the dedication in Ben's more recent books. (And here I have to make a personal confession: I always read book dedications before reading the book, convinced as I am that they tell you something about the author that will help you respond more appropriately to what is to follow.) His dedication to his 1994 book, *A Better World for Our Children*, validates my theory:

*To Mary Morgan*

Who can always tell me where to find my pencils;  
Who kept track of a thousand wandering pages of manuscript  
and helped to organize them into a book;  
Who never forgets an appointment or a pill;  
Whose expertness as chef makes eating a delight; who has  
magically improved my health and strength with exercises, meditation  
and group therapy;  
Whose energy and cheerfulness are inexhaustible;  
Whose compliments on my speeches and writings are my  
strongest inspiration;  
Whose love fills my life; and  
Whom I love dearly.

I think that those two dedications say a great deal about Spock the man and his personal relationships, certainly about Spock the husband. And they tell us a about the emotional meaning of the last twenty years of Ben Spock's life—perhaps as much as anything else you could read about him. The first dedication speaks objectively of a job well done; the second of a life made more livable. The first offers public recognition of a contribu-

tion; the second is a public acknowledgment of tenderness and love. Actually both are moving. The difference is that the second almost makes you cry.

Many of Ben's friends would not have predicted much longevity for his marriage to Mary Morgan, which occurred in 1976, when he was seventy-three and she was thirty-three. They differed in many ways other than age and height. She was a Southerner (and at that from a state formerly ridiculed as backward), an ardent feminist, a divorced mother who probably never consulted *Baby and Child Care* when her daughter was little (and who, I am tempted to say, may well have been the mother Ben had in mind when he wrote "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do," as Mary does not, at least on the surface, show much doubt about anything), who was into what today gets called alternative medicine—a true blithe spirit if ever there was one. She came into his life like a hurricane, blew down his reserve and conventionality, and helped create with him a solid structure of a relationship able to withstand the assaults of aging and health challenges. Note what Ben wrote about his relationship with Mary in *Spock on Spock*: "Mary is by far the person closest to me. When she is away, I miss her and keep looking for her" (p. 225).

It is my conviction that Ben and Mary have found what we all dream of finding—a lasting, mutually enhancing love. And they found it at a time in Ben's life when such a miracle is not very probable—if indeed it is probable at any time of life. In what they have found in and give to one another, they offer confirmation of the most beautiful line in *Les Miz*: "To love another person is to see the face of God."

#### SUMMARY

In Ben Spock's life we can trace the outline and the important events of the twentieth century. He has lived most of the century and, I am confident, will be around to sing "Auld Lang Syne" on 31 December 1999. He was a child in the period before the term "family values" had been coined, but even so his upbringing was of the sort that convinced scientists that the term referred to something more than myth and longing. He has lived through two world wars, serving in the armed forces in one of them. And, most importantly, he helped bring to a close the most unpopular nonwar-war in America's history. He made it through both the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression without being emotionally scarred by either of these periods of economic extremes. Although he couldn't find exactly the type of training he needed for his unique blend of pediatrics and child development, he took what was available and con-

verted it, like a powerful intellectual enzyme, to a form that the average parent could digest. And, most impressively, while *in* his sixties he survived “the sixties,” proving more conclusively than anyone else alive that there actually were people over thirty who could be trusted! He is that rare human being who has lived by his beliefs and principles.

Ben Spock’s appreciation of the role of development in human history can be seen nowhere more clearly than in the trajectory of his own life. Born into a family of, if not Boston Brahmins, at least New Haven Brahmins, he nonetheless learned to identify with those of less fortunate social and economic histories and to work diligently for their benefit. Exposed to personality-shaping family members with fixed ideas (on everything from proper gender roles to the importance of fresh air), he somehow managed to develop an *open mind* that could carry out the most valuable of all human functions: the ability to change. And change it did. In good Piagetian terms, he assimilated new information and accommodated his influential positions accordingly—on subjects seemingly as divergent as when and how to toilet train and when and how to make your convictions as a citizen known and felt. Ben changed his thinking, with a great deal of effective prompting from his wife, Mary Morgan, on acceptable roles for women and the implications of these for the rearing of children. Years ago I read and memorized a brief list of characteristics of living organisms formulated by the great physiologist Alex Carlson. At the top of the list was: “Living things change.” Perhaps it is Ben’s incredible ability to change that has allowed this giant of the twentieth century to help all of us prepare for the twenty-first.

For Ben Spock has been a segue man. Very much part of the twentieth century, he has realized how evanescent that 100-year slice of time is. Even fifty years ago, when *Baby and Child Care* first appeared, he seemed to be aware that the children of the parents to whom his book was addressed would themselves parent the children who would help determine the quality of life in the twenty-first century and beyond. In this context I found myself reflecting that, without realizing it, Ben Spock was writing advice for himself, not just parents, when he penned his opening line, “Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do.” He knew to trust his own thoughts and feelings when the medical and scientific establishments refused to take a stand on nuclear disarmament and what he perceived as an immoral war. Perhaps reluctantly, he knew that you have to oppose a president who breaks his word to you on critical issues. He trusted that there was more dignity associated with riding in a paddy



wagon than in a diplomatic limousine if you had to pay for the limousine ride with a slice of conscience.

Ben Spock is still learning, and growing, and writing. How fortunate Syracuse University is to have the papers of this man of the twentieth century who wrote and still writes for the twenty-first century and beyond!