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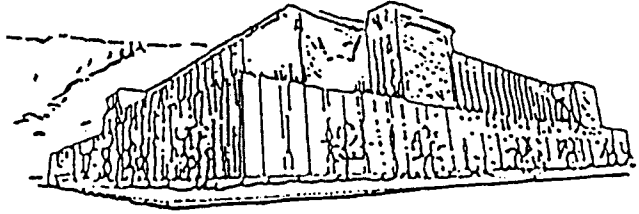
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Date April 29, 96

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CREATIVE PROJECT ASSESSMENT PAPER

A PERSONAL PERFORMANCE

BY

SARAH R. DEGRANDPRE

B.A. in DRAMA, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA, 1986

Presented in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

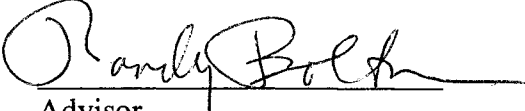
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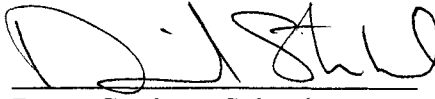
THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1996

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Advisor



Dean, Graduate School

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DeGrandpre, Sarah, M.I.S., May 18, 1995

Interdisciplinary
Studies - Arts/Ed

An Interdisciplinary Arts Education Creative Project Assessment Paper of "A Personal Performance by Sarah DeGrandpre." (pages: 65) ↗

Chair: Randy Bolton

The evolving self was the focus of a graduate creative project using narrative stories from early childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, as qualitative research to complete this process. This method was used throughout a three-year study to find how one perceives one's self to be and the effects on the self as artist, teacher, and learner.

The methodology of the research and documentation ranged from attending various lectures, reading, interviewing, expressing ideas without the use of written word - mainly through dance and movement choreography, and journal writing. This research led to a personal performance production of dance and selected narrative monologues concerning meaningful moments of transformation.

Producing the personal performance through this method was a concrete experience to validate and affirm the self as an artist, teacher, and learner. This method of personal performance proved to be a valuable guide to self-understanding and commitment to artistic performance.

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Glossary

- Field Project Research that is conducted outside of the classroom curriculum for the Arts Institute. It is used here in reference to a Dance Program completed with students at Big Sky High School and a study of self through the book, *Your Mythic Journey*.
- Footprinting This is a step by step written documentation of a creative process.
- Qualitative Research A type of research that involves the study of the quality of a creative process instead of the quality in regards to a measurement. It is used here in reference to Elliot Eisner's book *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*.
- Ritual In reference to a ceremonial act or action.
- Spiritual In relationship to acknowledgment of that which is sacred.
- Wisdom A way of knowing.

Overview of the Creative Project Proposal

This project was created specifically for the development of a personal performance piece that incorporated monologues, and dance movements to tell the stories and give expression to events in my life that have been significant moments of transition and learning.

The creative project combined: (1) preparation experience from my first personal performance presented in 1991 in connection with the Arts Institute; (2) my field projects with developing a creative movement and dance performance at Big Sky High School in 1992; and, (3) my field project of writing an in depth personal journey using the book, *Your Mythic Journey*, written by Sam Keen and Anne Valley-Fox.

I intended to emphasize the steps I took to develop and create the performance. I began with journalizing which led to specific self assigned subject writing and editing, choreographing a personal creative movement piece, observing and creating a movement performance piece with children ages 4 to 13, as well as working with other and former students for collaboration and direction.

The results I had hoped to gain from completing this project included: (1) the ability to focus my physical, mental, and emotional strengths in order to achieve personal growth as a performer as well as an artist, teacher, and human being; (2) to examine my own life experiences; and, (3) to grow personally through using the wisdom learned from the experiences to trust my intuitions in finding answers and share the knowledge gained in a performance that had universality in its appeal to others. In completion of this project I also intended to articulate what I had gained and discovered through completing this particular personal performance and creative project.

Chapter One - The Artist

You know that the beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken...

Plato's Republic

Since early childhood one of my biggest fears has been writing. I had a fear that someone would read my writing and see what I really thought or come to know through my writing that I can't spell very well and make several grammatical errors, and would make the judgement that not only can't I write very well but because of that conclude that I lack intelligence. As I sit here struggling to overcome the deep-seated fears I have in order to complete this process, I realize I have tried desperately to avoid the last step of writing this paper. It is always the thing that one fears most that one must do in order to overcome that fear. It is not enough to acknowledge the fear. One must work with it and, in a sense, conquer it. Conquering fears was the last thing I believed I would be doing when I started my Masters degree of Interdisciplinary Studies in Arts Education.

When I began my work with the Arts Institute I was looking for classes that would help increase my monetary status as a teacher. My expectations were low. I figured I would get a degree, a pay increase, and be taught about programs and ways to become more effective as a teacher. I thought I would go to class and be somewhat spoon fed information to take back to my classroom. What I had not expected was an educational program that would challenge the way I thought about myself, who I was, and what I was really doing. There have been obstacles and challenges for me to

overcome in completing this program in order to earn the degree of Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies in Arts Education. This was a program that changed my life.

In the summer of 1990 I had just given birth to my first child, six weeks before I enrolled in the afternoon sessions. Therefore, I was not a full-time student in the program. As I watched the others, I felt left out and realized that I wanted to be part of the core group. As the weeks passed, I became aware of the additional and intense rigor of the full program. I was having enough difficulties keeping up with the rigors of the afternoon program and being a new mother at the same time. It was to my benefit to start the program this way as I found I had some basic issues I needed to address. My first profound lesson of that summer was the idea of what an artist was. Until that moment I had never even considered myself an artist. It was a shock for me to realize this. I had been working in an art form and teaching in an art form and yet I never even thought of what I was doing in Drama as art. I did not think of myself as any type of artist. I had previously thought that artists were only those people who took up a palette and created images on canvas. Drama was not art, therefore, I was not an artist. There was no connection in my mind that literature, dance, music, and drama were art forms. I had them separated into what I thought was and was not art. In those first five weeks my eyes were opened. I had been entrenched in the idea that my work was entertainment, non-academic, and surplus. I was in a sense brainwashed to the notion that Drama was an insignificant extra curricular activity. At that point I could not even conceive of Drama as an art form. I realized I could and would indeed need to change the way I saw myself, and what I defined as art. The confrontation of this issue was the first of several that had

a profound effect on me through this particular program. It was my first step on a journey of many steps.

Chapter Two - The Dancer

The summer of 1991 I came back to the program as a full-time student. I was enrolled in the morning programs that included apprenticeships, seminar, and practicum work. For my apprenticeship, I was enrolled in dance. I had always wanted to dance. I felt somewhere inside me was a dancer but I would not consider myself a dancer even though I enjoyed moving. My body was not the tall and slender dancer's body. I believed that was what was required in order to dance. When I was sixteen years old I was in good physical condition from competitive ski racing. I felt I could dance and move on skis but dancing on the dance floor was only a dream. One day when I was an early adolescent my mother put on some music and asked me to dance for her. I wanted to, but I couldn't. I was too embarrassed and too self conscious to dance in front of my mother. When I walked into the dance studio there were mirrors all around and I could hardly concentrate on what I was doing. I hadn't had mirrors in my house except for a small bathroom mirror. Looking at myself in a full length mirror, I felt ashamed of what I had let my body become. As Simone de Beauvoir writes, "to lose confidence in one's body is to lose confidence in oneself."¹ I felt so uncomfortable inside my body and looking at myself I cried. The first day was horrible and yet I knew I would have to come back and face those mirrors again.

For the practicum course students were required to develop a personal

¹ Simone de Beauvoir quoted in Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia* (New York: Ballantine Books), 57.

performance. We were instructed to consider the deep and meaningful issues that related to our life, art, and teaching. We were guided along the way to our final performance through a series of short action presentations. In one such presentation I performed the action of taking symbols drawn on three 8½ x 11 sheets of paper. They included: a negative sign, representing how I felt toward my own intellect; a coroners outline of a body, representing how I felt towards myself in terms of my body image; and a clock, representing the pressures I felt towards time. I folded these pieces of paper up and stuffed them into the smallest baby food jar available. I took a hammer and smashed the jar to pieces. I threw what was left of the jar away, symbolically removing the baggage. It was a start of a new growth. I could have hammered until the floor broke. It was a long needed release and a powerful step to confronting these issues. However, I would continue to confront and deal with these issues as themes throughout my work in the graduate program as well as in my creative project.

During my first personal performance for the conclusion of that five week session I presented poetry and danced for the members of the Arts Institute. It was the first time I had danced in front of anyone since I was nine years old. I was not particularly proud of that performance as I worked on completing my poems and building three life size mannequin props until four in the morning. I hadn't taken a great deal of time to focus and put the performance together technically. My poetry was not memorized and I was not secure with this. I was out of shape and the audience could hear I was breathing hard, but the dance was a success. Although I've never danced for my mother, if she asked me today I could do so. I had come a long way from crying in front of the mirrors.

Chapter Three - The Writer

In the 1992 summer session, students were asked in the practicum to present information on the field projects they had chosen to work on throughout the previous year. I had decided to develop an after-school dance program with students from Big Sky High School where I was currently teaching courses in Drama. I wanted to see if I could establish a dance program in my school. I wanted to know if I could teach students what I had learned from dance. Questions I was interested in answering included: would they gain a sense of pride in themselves; an enjoyment and freedom of moving; and self-esteem when they were not professionally trained dancers? I chose to document this process through video taping each dance rehearsal class. I informed my students that the work we were doing together would help me with my educational program. I asked for interested volunteers to dedicate an hour and a half every day after school for six weeks. I worked with a group of ten students who wanted to dance and five technicians who wanted to operate the video camera, lights, and music for the process. The video included the rehearsals, discussions, final dance concert, and a critique following the performance. Several of my students stated in the critique that the movement and the creating of dances was refreshing as well as therapeutic. There was a great deal of laughter in our creative process. I was extremely proud of my field project. It was successful in that the kids loved the dances and were enthusiastic about what the dance program did for them and how they were able to create. I was proud of myself in that I could pull it together considering I am not an accomplished dancer and my dance experience is limited. Rollo May states in his book, *The Courage to Create*,

"Commitment is healthiest when it is not without doubt, but in spite of doubt."² I just did it because I didn't know I couldn't. I needed to see if I could do the project. I learned that I tend to accomplish things because I don't know I can't.

As second year students we were also instructed in the concept of personal teach. A personal teach presentation is a method of teaching through an activity or task that you are intensely committed and connected to. In the practicum I presented three personal teach lessons in the following manner. In one lesson I chose the activity of folding cloth diapers as I spoke of how sex education is often taught to teenagers. In another lesson I used the toy Barbie and Ken dolls that children often play with to teach about body image. For a final personal teach, I chose to challenge my students by asking them to hike to the top of a steep hill where they would then need to climb over a tall fence to get to an area where I would serve them refreshments as well as bathe their feet in water. I realized that to challenge and serve students was my metaphor for teaching. It is my belief that to teach is to place challenges for your students and to be of service to them so that they may reap the benefits of meeting those challenges. I was proud of my personal teach sessions. I felt that during my second summer I started to make connections and come into myself more as a teacher. I began standing up for what I believed in. Although, as a second year student, there were times when I felt as if I were falling into the second child syndrome. I wanted much more attention and step-by-step guidance in developing personal teach lessons. In looking back, not having somebody hold my hand

² Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 14.

every step of the way was the best thing for me, as I needed to make and find my own way. I needed to stand on my own two feet. I needed to follow my own path.

That summer I continued to work with dance for my apprenticeship class. I was slowly gaining back confidence in my body and mind. Although I was not enrolled for credit, I took the initiative to attend several of the writing apprenticeship classes. I began to think about writing. I read other poets' work and was introduced to the concept of place in writing through Richard Hugo's work *Triggering Town* and his anthology of *Selected Poems*. I was also instructed in the concept of timed writings. The class followed the rules suggested in Natalie Goldberg's book *Writing Down the Bones*. It was the first time I heard a writer suggest not to worry about spelling, punctuation, and grammar. This was very freeing to me and obviously the point. However the sixth rule was, "Go for the jugular."³ So where I felt freed in one sense I felt scared in another. I wasn't sure I wanted to write about anything that came up that might be scary, unpleasant, or painful to think about. Also I wasn't that interested in practicing timed writings. After all, I didn't think I really liked to write. It was an interesting moment when in the middle of one of my timed writings I realized I was enjoying the experience. My writing was slow and without full commitment. I was testing myself, but I was only dabbling. The challenge came when I proposed for my field project to keep an in depth personal journal using the book, *Your Mythic Journey*, written by Sam Keen and Anne Valley Fox as a guide. In my proposal I also stated I would write at least two entries a week from August

³ Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones* (Boston & London: Shambala Publications, Inc. 1986) 8.

1, 1992 through June 10, 1993. I believed I could keep the commitment of two entries a week. It seemed realistic and at that time almost easy. Consequently, I didn't realize how much writing would go into each entry. I did know, however, that to complete this project I would need commitment. I would not be able to dabble. If I wanted to honor my words, I would have to become a writer.

Chapter Four - The Performer

In the summer of 1993 I was back to complete the morning sessions I missed during the 1990 summer program. The work I would complete would be the conclusion of the Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies in Arts Education course work. I had finished my field project with recording my journal entries on May 22, 1993. I had used the book *Your Mythic Journey* like a travel guide to direct my writing. Now that I had completed it, I was somewhat lost. I did not know what to do next. Although I was at the end of the journey I did not feel as if I was home. I continued to write in my journal. I felt I had upheld the commitment of making two entries per week, although I missed eight entries in the last few weeks of the project as I was catching up on a great deal of reading. On the day I completed the last journal entry for the book, I wrote about the mixed feelings I was experiencing. For example, quoting from my journal, May 22, 1993:

I am done with my book, but I have lots more to do - to add. I have re-read these journals and I like my stories. I have more to add, similar questions to answer. I never even thought I'd fill one journal. I wonder if I have answered all the questions, if I've missed anything. I probably have and as I've written earlier I'm sure answers would be somewhat different at different times. I have things to go back to and copy or put in here, a quote page to fill, a book page to make. It's funny I started so neat when I started this project and now in so many places I struggle to read my own hand writing. Some of this was hard to write - hard to commit to paper - there is something so permanent about writing down secrets when you plan to keep the book you write in. Somehow it feels good to be done, to be finished and at the end, and in many ways it doesn't. I thought I'd feel like a celebration but I don't, and I don't feel relief. It's very strange - it's the letting go - and going on.

Along with journaling for this field project, I was also studying information on shamanism. Although I was very interested in this subject it made me quite nervous. I did not feel secure with my own Christian religion and I had fears that if I studied another

type of religion or religious belief system that I might lose faith in my own beliefs. To my surprise I gained more strength and faith in what I believed - much like a person who studies a foreign language and learns more about their own native language.

In my journal entry of June 4th I was still trying to assimilate where I was with this project and how I felt about it. I wrote:

I don't feel as strong going back this year as I did last year. I am very unsettled - this is not good. I should write more . . . I don't think I've really completed this project or done so well with it. It seems kinda silly. I don't know how I'm going to do my field project report - what can I say - it was meaningful to me, a challenge for me to write, to write anything at all . . .

The whole process was very self-centered and I did not feel justified in doing such a project. I felt badly about feeling this way even when I realized how important the project was to me. I felt I should be doing something that was more of a benefit to others. I was dealing with guilt feelings as it didn't seem right for me to be doing something that was so self-serving. I didn't present my field project well at all during the practicum that summer. The work had meant so much to me and I could not express what I had gained from it in an articulate manner to my peers.

For my apprenticeship that summer I was to join the writing program. I had wanted to join the dance apprenticeship again, but the writing would help me with what I needed most to work on. I needed to write more. This time I would be writing for credit and I was worried about doing so. I wouldn't be able to opt out if I didn't feel like doing the assignments. When my professor asked me what I liked to write I could only respond with what I didn't like to write. I didn't want to be writing paragraphs as one might find in an essay. I knew that that kind of writing would be my assignment. I started with

what I felt I was lousy at. I knew my assignment before it was even given to me. One must work at that which we think we are not best at. It is amazing the success one can have when one faces the difficult. I was assigned to write daily. Even with all the writing I had done with my field project I thought it was drudgery to write daily. Finding time to write was a big obstacle, and I still struggled with thinking that my writing was embarrassing. I gave myself the assignment to write paragraphs on emotions. Here I was the student who didn't like to write and I found the project stimulating. I wanted to see if I could do it. I didn't have much faith that I could write anything clearly but I liked challenging myself. Talking about writing and having a small encouraging group to work with was a great way to begin. This nurturing environment was the first time I ever experienced such a setting when writing. By the end of the summer, daily writing was part of my routine. I enjoyed trying to write a paragraph about an emotion. I started with writing about emotions I felt towards my family. I also tried to write from my other family members' point of view. This was a good exercise for me. I was most successful when I wrote passionately from my point of view. In my paragraph titled *Pain* I articulated how I felt about my mental and body image, these issues being recurring themes in my writing. In the paragraph *Fear* I recounted an event from my childhood. In *Resentment* I let my voice go on how I felt toward another member of the afternoon class sessions. Although I felt awkward about my use of language in *Resentment* it was freeing to let my voice come through. I knew I had connected into something with my writing that I wanted to continue working on and developing. I had also kept working with the

dance apprenticeship as I was developing an idea of a spiritual and ritual dance expressing a soul passing that I wanted to create for my final project.

As third year students we were led to the idea of personal research. At the end of the five week session we would be asked to individually present research regarding what we were planning on doing for our final project. I was completing my own research. In the past I would read what others had assigned me to read. Now I was giving myself my own assignments. Prior to the 1993 five week summer session, I had made three different final creative project proposals. My third proposal, to perform at least one dance piece that I choreographed and three personal monologues, was accepted. My professors felt it would help me develop as a "first person creative artist."⁴ In the beginning I didn't believe I had anything to say to others that would be meaningful or important in a performance piece. I wasn't even sure what stories in my past were meaningful to me. However, after completing the written work from my field project I believed I had material that could be used in a performance piece. At first I felt strongly about my stories but after I had shared some of my writing with an advisor I had doubts again. I wrote in my journal on July 9, 1993:

My stories seem to be disappointing - not exciting enough or as if made for TV drama.

I was committed to this creative project performance so I would have to see it through to the end. Even though in my proposal I planned to perform my creative project sometime

⁴ Bobby Tilton, Advisor to Sarah DeGrandpre, 2 June 1993 document in the hand of Sarah DeGrandpre, School of Fine Arts, University of Montana, Montana.

in November of 1993 I thought I could have my performance ready as early as July or August. I was quite wrong about my time deadlines. I thought I would have my performance all written during the 1993 summer session but I had other work to complete. I needed time to figure out how I was going to get from my one idea to the end project. I had my hands full with my writing apprenticeship and with the afternoon sessions. I was also trying to develop the concept to work with an idea I had about spiritual intelligence. I thought I'd be doing more written research than I was but I needed time for processing, and assimilating all that I had been exposed to. I needed time for basic writing and time for deep breathing . At the conclusion of that summer my focus was not on my creative project as I was about to give birth to my second child. When the summer session ended I was through with my class work and only had to come back with my project complete and ready to perform. Following the five week session, I received a letter from my advisors that stated, "You have the habit of talking and talking things to death with authority figures, or close ones, until you get final approval."⁵ I felt I had done well in my summer work. The letter went on to say, "Your project needs to promote further recognition of self, not asking for approval and not letting external judgement define what you do."⁶ It was hard for me to read this but I realized these people had been working with me and cared about me a great deal so I felt the information was telling me to make my own decisions. I did. I made the step from

⁵ James D. Kriley, Dean, to Sarah DeGrandpre, 4 August 1993, document in the hands of Sarah DeGrandpre, School of Fine Arts, University of Montana, Montana.

⁶ Ibid - document

asking for advice and help to finding it myself. I took the step from asking permission to just doing what I needed to do. I came back the following summer in July of 1994 ready to perform for the faculty and core group. I wrote and decided on most of my work while hiking to the M. I had chosen to perform monologues that were meaningful and important to me. I didn't stop to check in with people. I just came back prepared. When I walked into the Masquer Theatre and onto the stage, I knew my journey was at its end and I had come home. I was standing on my own two feet. I was an artist and I was performing.

Chapter Five - Accomplishments

We gain the full dignity and power of our persons only when we create a narrative account of our lives, dramatize our existence, and forge a coherent personal myth that combines elements of our cultural myth and our family myth with unique stories that come from our experience.

Sam Keen and Anne Valley Fox

When I first proposed my final creative project I wrote that I was to perform a one woman show in which I use creative movement dance and monologues to share my life journey and stories gained from using the book, *Your Mythic Journey* as my basic writing and self discovery guide. I wanted to continue to develop my artistic and performance abilities. I had been frustrated with my final personal performance presentation in the summer of 1991. I wanted to reach a higher level of ability in my performance work. I had written that my project would include at least one dance piece that I would choreograph and at least three personal monologues that I had written to be performed in a show that I directed and acted in. The project would also include an assessment of my performance from the audience members as well as my personal assessment. I believed that this project would help me to develop as an artist and performer. Although I believed my proposal to be a good proposal it was somewhat vague. However, the faculty accepted the idea because they believed it would help me develop as a, "first person creative artist." I was then asked to, "work closely with the faculty in developing and refining my performance concept."⁷

⁷ Bobby Tilton, Advisor, to Sarah DeGrandpre, 2 June 1993 document in the hands of Sarah DeGrandpre, School of Fine Arts, University of Montana, Montana.

Simply put, my intention was to put together a personal performance of events from my life for my final creative project. I didn't realize how time consuming and strenuous a project it would become. I had no idea of the rigor that would be involved in creating and performing. I did not envision the amount of writing and personal research I would be doing to complete my project. And I did not know how I would get from my basic idea, which was only the seed of an idea, to the final performance. This was quite disturbing to me as I had always felt I had worked backwards, in that I could see the final image in my mind even if I had no clue as to how I was going to get to that point. This method had always worked for me. As Francis Wickes stated, "To the rationally minded the mental processes of the intuitive appear to work backwards."⁸ I knew I was going to be doing a creative project but I did not know exactly how I would present it. I had deliberately put the emphasis on the steps I would take in the project instead of visualizing the final product. Until I had enrolled in the Arts Institute, it had never occurred to me to document any of the steps in my thought process, the method of footprinting was unknown to me. I hoped this process would help me to realize and focus on how I created works of art. I could not conceive of the significant effects this process would have on me.

In order to put my ideas into action I believed I had to start writing daily whether I believed I could write or not. I just had to do it. The mythic journey journal helped me as it gave me a strong beginning. I didn't worry so much about how I was writing in

⁸ Francis Wicker, as quoted in Julia Cameron, *The Artist Way* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee Books, 1992), 132.

terms of grammar and spelling. I just wrote the answers to the questions. I wrote my stories for myself to read, not for anybody else or for another's benefit. It was a very private matter. The beginning of this process was difficult. On the first page of my journal I wrote:

I have been struggling with this question all week in fact this whole set of questions. I don't know. I don't feel unique. All these questions are tough to answer.

And then further on I wrote:

I don't feel comfortable with sharing secrets, even in my own personal journal. Subject areas I don't share are who I really am, what I do wrong, things about me I don't want others to know such as how I work and keep up with things, problems with time and schedules - not being able to be "super mom" feeling like a failure because I can't do everything . . .

Another entry stated:

I'm trying to be honest and I'm feeling like this book is invading my privacy.

And again in another entry I wrote:

These questions are difficult to answer. There is something so permanent about writing down the truth, your beliefs, it can't be taken back. I have fears, what if someone were to read this, do I dare to write down what really happened, does it matter to others - would it hurt others.

It was hard to get to a point where I could write truthfully without allowing my mind to edit before anything was written. Several of my stories took a great force to put down on paper because I was fighting the concept of having irrevocable proof of what I really thought and how I actually felt. When reading what I wrote I would come face to face with who I truly was. Even though I knew this work was private, it was still risky. I didn't know if I would like what I would discover and I knew I did not want anyone else

to see this private side of me. It took me almost an entire year of writing to get to a point where I stopped judging and worrying about what I was writing.

What was interesting to me is that after the first initial months of writing I began to look forward to the time spent working on my journal. I became committed to my personal research. I was deeply engaged in finding my personal mythology through the unique stories of my experience. As I came to the end of the book *Your Mythic Journey*, which I had been using as a guide, I found other books to work with. I started a writing journal of daily pages as suggested in the book, *The Artist's Way - A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. I continued to write responses to the task and check-in sections from *The Artist's Way*, in the journal I had started for the mythic journey. I also began to propose my own questions and answers. I started to guide my own journey as questions led to more questions. Much of the work and writing I did in relation to *The Artist's Way* led me to my final performance.

When it came time for me to look at the stories I had written and make selections as to which stories I might turn into monologues for performance purposes, I found I had an abundance of work to choose from. I had two and a half 9" x 12" sketch books filled with journal entries. I began to look at stories where the transformation was great. The event or triggers may or may not have been universal but the outcomes were, in that a transformation of new insight had taken place. With each event came the knowledge that my life had changed. Each event was a growth in learning about myself and an acknowledgement of who I was.

The process of selecting stories to turn into monologues was a process that came together rather quickly in relationship to the struggle of writing all the stories in my mythic journey. I knew which life stories I wanted to share but I needed time and solitude to process how to put it all together. In his book *The Courage to Create*, Rollo May writes, "It (constructive use of solitude) requires that we be able to retire from a world that is 'too much with us,' that we be able to be quiet, that we let the solitude work for us and in us."⁹ In my first field project proposal I had proposed that I would take one actual journey into a mountain wilderness area where I would be alone for 24 hours. I hadn't had a chance to complete that end of my project as I was six months pregnant at the time had planned to make my journey. On July 3, 1994, I finally took that journey.

My performance date was already looming in the near future. I knew I could not change this date as I was already behind the dates I had originally set for myself. Besides, I was ready for this next step. I needed to complete my journey with a performance. I had been climbing to the M daily since the beginning of my summer break. As Rollo May states, "insight comes at a moment of transition between work and relaxation."¹⁰ I used this time of hiking to transform my stories into monologues and my monologues into a personal performance. It was during this time that I gained insight for my personal performance. It was then that I made most of my connections for my performance. Creating this performance and putting it all together was like climbing a

⁹ Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 72.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

mountain to me. I saw the connection in physically climbing the mountain and I used it as my metaphor for my final performance. "By changing your metaphors and images of yourself and your language, you can enlarge your public self and the possibilities open to you."¹¹ I would put my project footnoting notebook in my backpack, pose my questions at the base of the M and then hike to the top of the mountain. When I got to the top I would sit in solitude with my journal open and let the answers come to me.

It is an active listening, keyed to hear the answer, alert to see whatever can be glimpsed when the vision or words do come. It is a waiting for the birthing process to begin to move in its own organic time. It is necessary that the artist have this sense of timing, that he or she respect these periods of receptivity as part of the mystery of creativity and creation."¹²

I had waited long enough. I had a narrative account of my life. I had started my journey by writing answers to questions, which led to stories, which transformed into a performance of dance, songs, and monologues which told the transformation stories of growth and learning that impacted my life. I was ready to perform. Rollo May, in his book *The Courage to Create* stated the following:

It is easier in our society to be naked physically than to be naked psychologically or spiritually - easier to share our body than share our fantasies, hopes, fears, and aspirations, which are felt to be more personal and the sharing of which is experienced as making us more vulnerable. For curious reasons we are shy about sharing the things that matter most.¹³

¹¹ Sam Keen and Anne Valley-Fox, *Your Mythic Journey* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc. 1973), 9.

¹² Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 92.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

In my performance, I was sharing exactly what Rollo May was addressing. My opening performance contained a dance piece in which I was expressing a soul passing between myself and my brother Donny. Although I was still in my mother's womb at the time, I was present when he was alive. Donny died shortly before my birth but I have always felt I've known him. My opening piece was an expression of this concept. From there I moved into my monologues which contained issues of birth, growing up, personal issues of how I saw my mind and body, as well as my hopes of seeing my grandfather again, my spiritual beliefs, my fears, and my aspirations. I was performing my stories that contained the same issues and themes that two years ago I could barely force myself to write down in a personal journal, let alone come face to face with in order to deal with them and work with them into a public performance. The level of risk was high for me as once I voiced my performance it would be irrevocable. I did not know how the performance would be received. I had not worked closely with the faculty in developing and refining my performance. I had not let external judgement define what I did. I took charge of creating the whole performance. In the audience were my students, parents of students, faculty, people I knew quite well, and people I didn't know at all. As I watched the audience go into the theater I became quite nervous. I had cried many tears in writing this performance. My stories were very emotional and important to me. It was essential that I performed well. My mental, physical, and emotional abilities were focused and strong that evening. My performance was all that I imagined it could be and more. It was successful and powerful. I walked off the stage feeling that I had accomplished a great deal. I had proven that I had developed my artistic and performance abilities to a

high level of achievement. My performance had universal appeal. I had "become authentically public only by first going to the depths of the private. At the heart of the uniqueness of the individual lies the universal."¹⁴

¹⁴ Sam Keen and Anne Valley-Fox, *Your Mythic Journal* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc. 1973), 4.

Chapter Six - Expected and Unexpected Results

We come to know the world, in part, by virtue of the text we read, the images we see, and the songs we sing.

Elliot W. Eisner

My goals were to recreate an event through dance that happened prior to my birth, to share monologues in a story telling manner, and to improve on my abilities from my first personal performance. I expected to complete the project with a choreographed dance and a written script that I would perform for a live audience. I wanted to give expression to events in my life and I wanted those events to have some universality in their appeal. It seems my expectations were low as I didn't think deeply about what my expectations were and what results I would achieve. If asked beforehand what my expectations were, I would have said this: To create a personal performance that told a few stories and to perform better than my first personal performance. I achieved all of my stated expected results and more.

I was much more surprised by my unexpected results. Before I completed this project I was more concerned about keeping up with a time deadline that I had set for myself than the work I was doing. I wanted to graduate and be finished with this program. I thought that this performance would be the easiest and least time consuming of the three creative project proposals I submitted for approval. I never thought for a moment that this project would be life affirming and life changing. I had not realized that this performance would be an affirmation that I was truly an artist. I was not just accepting that what I did was called art.

When I started my class work with the Arts Institute I had not understood the

concept of either quantitative or qualitative research. At the conclusion of this project I have a mass quantity of material that is qualitative research. I did not set out to accomplish a qualitative study in my creative project but the project has produced just that. Elliot Eisner cites the six features of a qualitative study:

1) be field focused, in that, "qualitative researchers observe, interview, record, describe, interpret, and appraise settings as they are," . . . 2) use the self as an instrument, meaning that, "the self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it." . . . 3) have interpretive character meaning, "to give account for what they have given an account of," and "explain why something is taking place" . . . 4) display the use of expressive language . . . 5) to pay attention to particulars . . . 6) pertain to the criteria for judging their success. "Qualitative research becomes believable because of its coherence, insight, and instrumental utility."¹⁵

I found that I had included each of the features in my creative project thus I had unexpectedly done qualitative research.

Another unexpected result came with my self assigned writing exercises in which I had elected to write paragraphs or short narratives on emotions. Although I am still editing, I have the beginning of a book of paragraphs expressing some forty different emotions. I began with writing about my family and the emotions I felt toward them. This process helped me to face and deal with my personal issues in a clear and constructive way. I was then able to move on and work with other emotions dealing with a wide range of subjects. For example in *Satisfaction* and *Contentment*, I'm dealing with how I feel about being a housewife and mother. While I was writing my performance, I was also writing daily pages in regards to *The Artistic Way* as well as continuing to guide

¹⁵ Elliot Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice* (New York: MacMillian 1991), 32-39.

my own writing in my mythic journal. Where once I needed to write to fulfill a credit, now I write to fulfill a need. When I started this program I loathed writing. I was so debilitated by my writing, I could barely get anything down on paper. Today I relish the time I have to write and I allow myself time to write in my journals daily.

The third and possibly the most significant unexpected result of this program is how I have grown as a creative artist and learner. I have taken a solid stand of owning who I am. I used to wait to be led, now I lead. Before I started this program I waited for people to give me the information I needed. I was not doing my own research. I did not trust in myself and my own knowledge that I could do this. From various encounters such as parental comments, teachers' comments, and returned test scores, I believed I was just of average intelligence and therefore lacked higher intelligence to succeed scholastically. During an undergraduate education course I was given the information on the minimum expectations of I.Q. scores. For an average I.Q. the expectation was elementary and less difficult secondary courses. I justified my success in college because I had worked hard and I was tenacious.

There are two kinds of intelligence: One acquired, as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says, collecting information from the traditional sciences as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world
You get ranked ahead or behind others
in regard to your competence in retaining
information. You stroll with this intelligence
in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more
marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one
already completed and preserved inside you.
A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness
in the center of the chest. This other intelligence
does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid,
and it doesn't move from outside to inside
through the conduits of plumbing - learning

This second knowing is a fountainhead
from within you, moving out.

Rumi

Along with writing research, during this process I was doing a great deal of reading research. If one book or author inspired me I read the notes, references, and bibliographies the author cited and selected titles to continue my pursuit of knowledge. Although I felt I was lacking in analytical, linguistic, and mathematical intelligence, I felt I made up for that deficit through other types of intelligence. Until the summer of 1991, I had never been exposed to Howard Gardner and his theory of multiple intelligences even though he proposed his theory in 1983. I was searching for knowledge on a type of intelligence I knew existed and I felt I possessed. I was looking for information in relationship to the intelligence of "just knowing." This is a type of spiritual or intuitive intelligence. Many authors such as Jerome Bruner, Howard Gardner, Rollo May, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi will allude to this type of intelligence but few will label it. It is often referred to as inner wisdom, coincidence, synchronicity, or intuition. Although there is no test for this type of intelligence many will attest to its existence. In the end it doesn't really matter if I can find irrevocable evidence of this type of intelligence. It is part of who I am and it is enough to know that it exists. I have learned to have faith and trust in myself and my intellect. I have taken a solid stand of owning who I am which has

been critical to me as a person, artist, and teacher. Through this process I have become a self guided life learner.

Chapter 7 - Significance of Project

To know ourselves is the greatest achievement of our species. And to understand ourselves - what we are made of, what motives drive us, and what goals we dream of - involves, first of all, and understanding of our evolutionary past. Only on that foundation can we build a stable, meaningful future.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Throughout this paper I have articulated who I was and how I thought about myself from the beginning of this program to where I am today. With each step I have changed. I am not the same person I was six years ago. I have been in a constant state of transformation. At the beginning I had many fears. However, "Fear is a poor excuse for not doing the work."¹⁶ I have faced fear, worked with it and grown from it. Anytime one can conquer a fear, the growth is phenomenal. I learned to work through fears. I studied my past, present, and future by writing my life stories. I learned to look for and recognize the rituals in my life. As Robert Fulgrum writes in his book, *From Beginning to End*:

"Rituals do not always involve words, occasions, officials, or an audience. Rituals are often silent, solitary, and self contained. The most powerful rites of passage are reflective - when you look back on your life again and again, paying attention to the rivers you have crossed and the gates you have opened and walked on through, the thresholds you have passed over."¹⁷

I have learned to express my ideas in an original and creative artistic permanence. "If you do not express your own original ideas, if you do not listen to your own

¹⁶ Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run with the Wolves* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 145.

¹⁷ Robert Fulgrum, *From Beginning to End: The Rituals of Our Lives* (New York: Ivy Books, 1995), 52.

being you will have betrayed yourself."¹⁸ I learned to defend and trust in my choices.

Through this project I have come to a point in my life where I can state my convictions as well as learn and live by them. I have become conscious of my potential.

Csikszentmihalyi writes, "To contribute to greater harmony, a person's consciousness has to become complex."¹⁹ Complexity of consciousness involves:

"becoming aware of and in control of one's unique potentials, and being able to create harmony between goals and desires, sensations and experiences, both for oneself and for others."²⁰

Csikszentmihalyi calls an individual whose psychic energy is invested in complex goals a "transcender or a T-person."²¹ Keen writes in *Your Mythic Journey* that "It takes courage to admit that we have created much of our suffering, and to take steps to dismiss it."²²

Once I was able to recognize where I was at with my issues I was able to tackle them. I am in much better shape physically than I was in 1990. My image of my body has improved, which has affected the mind-body connection I wrote of in this paper and in my creative performance. I have learned how not to let time control me, and so the image of the clock I destroyed so long ago is truly insignificant as one of my issues. I have learned to express my emotions but not let them possess me. "Psychological research

¹⁸ Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 3.

¹⁹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Evolving Self* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, Inc., 1993), 207.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

²² Sam Keen and Anne Valley-Fox, *Your Mythic Journey* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1973), 96.

suggests that people most predisposed to develop cancer are those who fail to express their emotions."²³ I had spoken of my father's inability to express his emotions in my personal research presentation in 1993. In March of 1994 we discovered that my dad had cancer. I wonder now if his failure to express himself had anything to do with the growth of tumors. My project and qualitative research on my family has started the family talking. We are able to talk through many emotions. My performance came shortly after my father's operations. As a result of this project and his illness we have become a more open and expressive family. My project was not just story telling but also creating a personal mythology that made sense out of my life stories and gave the events significance. Through all of this I have become a "T-person." The significance of this project is in the transformations I have made in becoming who I am today and who I will evolve into in the future. In Bruner's book, *Acts of Meaning*, chapter four - Autobiography of Self, he includes a quote by Donald Polkinghorne who is referring to self in the *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*:

We achieve our personal identities and self concept through the use of narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revive the plot as new events are added to our lives.²⁴

Through this project I have taken charge of my physical, emotional, and intellectual abilities. Indeed I have come to know that:

²³ Ibid., 56.

²⁴ Donald Polkinghorne quoted in *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 115-116.

To remain vibrant throughout a lifetime we must always be inventing ourselves, weaving new themes into our life-narratives, remembering our past, re-visioning our future, reauthorizing the myth by which we live.²⁵

The exploration through this project has allowed me to learn how to nurture myself. I have been able to look at problem areas in my life and do something about them. I had become stagnant in my learning and as an artist. My life was out of balance. The negativity I felt towards myself was destroying me. I had allowed myself to get mentally and physically out of shape. Through dance, hiking, and jogging I found that my mind functioned clearer. When I was not keeping physically fit I was not being creative. Through exercise I could problem solve and the problem solving was easier due to the physical exercise. When jogging or hiking my mind was in flow state. I could do the task with maximum ease and my mind was clear to think, create, and imagine. Previously, I had not allowed this time for myself. Due to this project I have balance in my life, and if I lose balance I regain it quickly because through nurturing myself I keep track of how I'm doing. Now, I am to myself, the teacher I am to others. I give myself time to learn and to be an artist. I recognize what it is I want to study and I give myself time to pursue that study whether it be dance, writing, psychology, or physical fitness. I allow myself time to perform. I permit myself time to create, such as designing costumes, making prints, and building sculptures. In the past, I had worried so much about what others thought. I had wanted to be "book smart" in that I believed I needed to be well read enough to that I could back up my own points with quotes from others.

²⁵ Sam Keen and Anne Valley-Fox, *Your Mythic Journey* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1973), XV.

Through this paper, I have realized I am able to do just that. More importantly, I have learned to express myself. I have come to trust myself, my intelligence, and who I am. As Shakti Gawain stated, "We will discover the nature of our particular genius when we stop trying to conform to our own or other peoples' models, learn to be ourselves, and allow our natural channel to open."²⁶

²⁶ Shakti Gawain as quoted in Julia Cameron, *The Artist Way* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee Books, 1992), 69.

Chapter 8 - Other Assessment and Critique Questionnaire Responses

There is something curious about autobiography. It is an account given by the narrator in the here and now about a protagonist bearing his name who existed in the there and then, the story terminating in the present when the protagonist fuses with the narrator.

Jerome Bruner

When I was nine years old I can remember composing poetry as I walked to the bus stop for school in the morning and doing the same on the way home in the afternoon. I walked in a world of my own tuning the noise out. One of my very first poems was:

Hello little squirrel,
High up in that tree.
Scampering down to,
To take a look at me.

When I went into high school I was able to take a creative writing class. My teacher labeled my poems as trite and told me that if I worked very hard I could possibly write for greeting cards. It crushed me to hear her say this and I did not share my writing again with anyone until I started this program. I did not think it was worthwhile for me to write, now I write daily. Completing this project along with writing this paper has been a big accomplishment for me and is a completion of a long journey.

When I created my performance monologues and dance pieces I had hoped I would have material that would translate to others. This was important to me because of the risk I was taking in telling these very personal stories. I did not know how the audience would respond. I believed that if the audience could relate to the stories, that they would then have a sense of pathos and glean an understanding of how I had grown from the experiences. I had spent a great deal of time in the library with the *Oxford*

English Dictionary looking up the definitions of many words such as construction, connect, process, zone, ritual, spiritual, rite, intelligence, knowledge, hectic, change, and acceptance. I felt that if I could come up with a title that summed up my stories, it would help the audience relate to the performance. Titles I considered ranged from *Living in a Construction Zone*, *Celebration of Life*, *Acceptance and Change*, *Influences*, *Life's Circle*, *A Journey*, *Molded and Sculpted*, to *Transformations*. In the end I decided to title the piece simply what it was, *A Personal Performance*. "We need to be willing to let our intuition guide us and then be willing to follow that guidance directly and fearlessly."²⁷ Before I walked on stage I took a deep breath, settled my nerves, and went fearlessly into my performance. The following is a sample of responses to the critique questionnaire following my performance.

1. What did the first dance sequence symbolize to you?

- ◆ A child within the womb.
- ◆ Birth - connections between present and physical world.
- ◆ You as an infant in the womb.
- ◆ Your life before you were born, it was obvious you and your brother knew each other.
- ◆ Your birth, your relationship with your brother whom you know spiritually.

²⁷ Shakti Gawain as quoted in Julia Cameron, *The Artist Way* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee Books, 1992), 47.

- ◆ Sarah in her womb with her brother playing outside, when he died he joined Sarah spiritually and played with her.
- ◆ Dream sequence - communication with brother/guardian angel (very powerful and effective).

2. What story or aspect of the performance did you relate to or enjoy most and why?

- ◆ The King Jesus song, I loved your strong voice.
- ◆ Hearing you sing the lullaby, it was beautiful.
- ◆ Your last dance, it was so raw - so simple
- ◆ I related to the monologue section quite a bit, but I really enjoyed the last dance routine! Very emotional.
- ◆ The puberty/period story and the dance with your brother - you captured the feeling of childhood.
- ◆ Dancing was wonderful - I too have a guardian angel who died the year I was born.
- ◆ The element of spirituality.
- ◆ The monologues were moving, funny, and well done.
- ◆ I enjoyed your story about your grandfather baptizing you and then when you wrote to him - that touched my heart.
- ◆ The monologues about your sexual education or lack thereof - because I wasn't sexually educated either.

- ◆ I liked the open manner of discussion about life issues and then watching you deal with them through movement RISKY!
3. Did you feel that there was a clear presentation of events? Did I do a good job of relating the experiences?
- ◆ Yes. I loved the transition of song to monologue.
 - ◆ Yes, very much so - touching.
 - ◆ Of course with unbelievable and abundant honesty.
 - ◆ I think you did an excellent job of relating your baptism to the audience - your grandfather reaching for you.
4. What connections did you feel I was making throughout the performance?
- ◆ Importance of family and faith.
 - ◆ Spiritual connections - connections to family values.
 - ◆ Connection with Donny, grandfather and father and how you came to terms with them.
 - ◆ The warmth of your family - the strength of your self concept.
 - ◆ Closeness and loss, what things are important in life, some of the trials of growing - not just growing up, but growing daily.
5. If you were to describe this performance to a friend in a few words, what would you say it was about?
- ◆ Life, finding one's self and becoming alive.
 - ◆ Truthful sharing and depiction of life transformations.

- ◆ Multi-faceted autobiographical self-exploration.
- ◆ Knowing self.

As Eisner stated, "Consensus breeds confidence in the objectivity of the judgements rendered."²⁸ The night I presented my personal performance was a wonderful night for me. I walked off the stage feeling very proud of what I had accomplished. I looked forward to seeing myself perform and listening once again to the critique via the video tape. However, one of my greatest disappointments of this whole process has been that the video tape was destroyed. I do not know if it was ruined when the performance was being filmed or if it happened when I brought the tape home to rewind it. I do know that my VCR has never ruined a tape before or since my performance tape was destroyed. In many ways the destruction of this tape could be viewed as a positive example of synchronicity in that I am my own worst enemy and highly critical of myself. What I have left from my performance is a very strong feeling of success and many wonderful written comments filled out by audience members. I am forced to remember only the success of the project. I know that through this process I have gained a deeper understanding of my life and, as Jung states,

Creative ideas, in my opinion, show their value in that, like keys, they help to "unlock" hitherto unintelligible connections of facts and thus enable man to penetrate deeper into the mystery of life.²⁹

²⁸ Elliot Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice* (New York: MacMillan, 1991), 45.

²⁹ Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1967), 387.

Chapter 9 - Transformation of an Artist and Teacher

Just because you are a teacher does not mean you stop being an artist. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise. I don't care how many progress reports and assessments you have to write, you are still an artist first and foremost. If you are not, don't teach theater. Thousands and thousands of people are affected by the work you do.

Craig Slight

When I came into this program I did not believe I was an artist. I was a teacher but I had fallen into the trenches of paper work -- the daily rhetoric of dealing with red tape in order to build up a solid drama department. I had a passion for teaching theater, but somehow I lost some of that passion in working to keep my job. When drama, art, and music programs are constantly being referred to as nonacademic, extra-curricular and viewed as surplus, one can see how the arts are constantly being put on the chopping block. Being told there will be cut backs and then there won't be cut backs is wearing on the soul. Much of my time was spent defending what I was doing, which took the focus away from being an artist first and foremost. After years of teaching, I had lost the artist within me. I had forgotten the responsibilities of being an artist and practicing my craft. I didn't even refer to myself as an artist.

My creative project brought me back to why I became a Drama teacher. It reconnected me with the love I have for performing. It had been too long since I had performed. I had not allowed myself the opportunity to do so, and after a while I was afraid I no longer knew how. My solo performance gave me the opportunity to create and perform in a lead role. It also gave me the opportunity to work with others, namely former students who had been in my drama program and had

graduated from Big Sky High School. The combined effort of putting this whole show together has resulted in my being able to take myself seriously. I am not surplus. Art is not nonacademic. *Webster's* dictionary defines academic as "relating to literary or art rather than technical or professional studies."³⁰ Art is basic to the very reason our life has importance. Art is what gives life meaning. This process was a reconnecting of all those ideals I had as a student but lost as a teacher. *Webster's* defines an academician as:

"1a: a member of an academy for promoting science, art, or literature. b: a follower of an artistic or philosophical tradition or a promoter of its ideas."³¹

Through this program I have become an academician. I have taken this idea of personal performance into my classroom. It is now part of my Drama II curriculum. I believe that to perform one's beliefs and passions is to be seen and heard. It has been interesting in working with my students, in that the word *personal* means to them some deep dark secret that they are being asked to share in a performance. Some of my students get personal performance confused with therapy. I explain that the performance is not therapy although it can be very therapeutic. The first time I presented this format for performance, many of the students struggled with the word personal. Student performances ranged from a performance dealing with the issues of date-rape to a student reading a story about a camping trip with his father. As Csikszentmihalyi stated, "A creative project is never random or arbitrary; it must be true to something deeply sensed

³⁰ *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (1972), s.v. "academic"

³¹ *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (1972) s.v. "academician."

or felt inside the person."³² Rigor of the project and how rigor needs to be addressed must be relative to where the student is comfortable. The object is to make the experience a positive learning experience, not a debilitating one. As a teacher I work with where the student is at. I guide students along with what they are capable of doing. In many cases this is the first time a student has been asked to present such a performance. I encourage my students, but I let them push themselves to discover what they are capable of producing. I have helped to offset many of my students' initial fears of creating this performance simply by renaming the process solo performance. Before I started the Arts Institute program I rarely performed. Today I work along with my students in developing solo performances, preparing auditions, and acting in plays that are student directed. At first it was quite difficult for me to hear my students critique and direct me, but now both myself and the students look forward to performing with each other. It is a great learning experience for all of us.

The project of writing my life stories has been the springboard for all of this work. Through this work I have developed my strengths as a teacher. Eisner writes:

The task in coaching teachers is not to try to transform the pedagogical signature of a teacher into another form, but to help the teacher develop strengths that "come naturally."³³

³² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Evolving Self* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, Inc., 1993), 62.

³³ Elliot Eisner, *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice* (New York: MacMillian, 1991), 79.

Through this program, I have developed and strengthened my natural abilities as a teacher and artist. "In the end as in the beginning there will be a vast silence broken by the sound of one person telling a story to another."³⁴

³⁴ Sam Keen and Anne Valley-Fox, *Your Mythic Journey* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1973), 128.

Appendix A - Program



A personal performance

by

Sarah DeGrandpre

PERFORMANCE ORDER

Soul Passing - First Dance Sequence

Baby's boat

Personal Monologues

King Jesus

For My Parents - Prelude To Love

"Donny"

John Donovan Doyle Jr.

(June 2, 1954 - August 16, 1961)

The following song was sung during my brother's funeral.

When at night I go to sleep,
 Fourteen angels watch do keep;
 Two my head are guarding,
 Two my feet are guiding,
 Two are at my right hand,
 Two are at my left hand,
 Two who warmly cover,
 Two who o'er me hover,
 Two to whom is given to guide my steps to heaven.

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My Grandfather

Wesley Maffit Moore

(April 13, 1908 - January 11, 1994)

I am so fortunate to be a teacher. Several of my former students are helping me with this performance. And many of my current students have supported me through listening to my stories and hearing about my work in this program. My daughter, Katie, refers to my students as my friends and teachers, and she is right.

I would like to thank Jeremy Glenn, who I am dancing with in this performance, and Jan Dwyer, who is my stage manager.

I would also like to thank Lisa Berger Carter, Nikki Pagniano, Rob Beatty and Cathy Skjei.

Appendix 2 - Final Creative Performance

First Narration (Taped)

It was December 1992. I was pregnant with my second child. I couldn't sleep. My family surrounded me in my parents' house. Dan and Katie were sleeping on the bedroom on the left and my brother Mike was sleeping in the bedroom across the hall. I was upstairs on a couch that is in an open loft between the two rooms. Downstairs I could hear the sounds of my mother sleeping on the couch below. She was not settled either and in the room beneath me was my dad. It was not often that we were altogether. I wanted to run away from them. I wanted to shut out the sounds I could hear and escape. I crawled into the couch and the sounds became muffled. I could hear my own breathing and as I concentrated on the baby I was carrying I was sure I would have a son. My child would be born in August, the same month that my brother Donny died in 1961. I was born in November of that year. I thought back to my birth. I began to feel as if I was floating in my mother's womb and I thought of my family so long ago before I was born. I was aware of Donny's presence. Now he is an angel that watches over me.

First Dance Progression - Technical

Lights down

Red light up (slow)

Sound tape in (1st heartbeat sounds)

Jeremy's white light up (slow)

Sound tape (heartbeat fades out parents' voices in)

Sound tape (Walking My Baby Back Home in)

Sound tape (end Walking My Baby Back Home loud) (Jeremy falls)

Jeremy's white light out blackness except for red light up

Jeremy's white light 3 sec pause then slow up to half

Sound tape (Silence)

(Jeremy walks to red light)

Sound tape (Jesus Loves Me)

Jeremy's light and center light full up

White light on wall up during last chorus - Jesus Loves Me

Sound tape coming to an end

Center white lights fade

(Sarah in Red light - Jeremy in white light)

Jeremy's white light goes out

Red light fades out slow

Darkness sounds of woman giving birth

Sound tape (Baby's cry)

Song Baby's boat begins

Light comes up slowly on couch during song

First Song

Baby's boat a silver moon
Sailing in the sky
Sailing o'er a sea of sleep
While the stars float by.

Sail, baby, sail
Out upon that sea,
Only don't forget to sail
Back again to me.

Baby's fishing for a dream,
Fishing near and far.
Her line a silver moonbeam is,
Her bait a silver star.

Sail, baby, sail
Out upon that sea,
Only don't forget to sail
Back again to me.

Monologue 1

My mother used to sing that song to the boys and she taught it to me when my first child was born. My mother taught me many things and I've come to know her as a strong and wise woman. She used to tell me, "Don't grow up too fast because once you do, you are grown up forever." And yet, at the same time she taught me, "There are some things in this life you just have to do," like learning to swim.

Well you had to learn to swim in Minnesota where I grew up or at least know something about water safety. They're not kidding when they say it's the land of 10,000 lakes. There's either a pond, river or lake within a mile from anywhere you stand in that state. I learned to swim.

I was also told I would have to learn to drive a car. I was 18 when I learned to drive. I just didn't want to have anything to do with driving a car. My driving instructor didn't believe me when I told him I didn't even know how to start the car, let alone get it into gear. He was equally shocked when he realized he'd actually have to teach me to drive. I think he must have come to this realization after I started the car again, for the second, time while the engine was already running. I still do that when I'm really tired. I was a little bit nervous. You do that and it makes such a terrible sound, you know you've done something wrong even if you don't know anything about cars. We spent the first hour driving around a deserted parking lot. I felt sorry for my teacher, but he didn't give up on me and I learned to drive well enough to pass my test.

I had to learn the same way, again, when my dad taught me to drive a stick shift. I was 26 years old at the time. Every time I stalled the car out I wanted to put my head

down on the wheel and cry. I was very good at stalling out the car. My dad just kept making me laugh. It's funny, I bought a car I couldn't drive. I had to ask my dad to test drive it for me. The dealer kept asking me if I'd like to drive it, but I told him I was okay sitting in the back seat. He must of suspected I didn't know how to drive. So I drove a stick shift for my first time in the Big Sky High School parking lot where I was a first year teacher, and then through "malfunction junction" in five o'clock traffic. My palms were sweating and my knuckles where white from holding the wheel so tight. I laughed as my dad teased me about not letting the wheel drive off without me or something to that extent. But I didn't let go of the wheel and I learned to drive. I still have that car today. Now I can read and drive a stick at the same time, although I don't recommend it for most people.

I believed my mother's words when I was a child, but I never understood the wisdom held within those two sentences. Now I hear myself saying them to others. Somewhere in this building is a box with a picture of a three-year-old wearing a new backpack. Her name is Katie and she is my daughter. When I look at the photograph, I see a child excited to grow up, to get into things, to go to school, to learn, a child who is ready to go out into the world. The day this picture was taken Katie told me, "My new backpack has my special things in it and there is lots of room for more." A friend asked me to include an explanation with the photo, but I left it blank with no explanation given. It is for others to look at and think what does this picture of a child mean in this box full of treasures?

Monologue 2

I am not a native Montanan and I hate to admit that, especially when I've heard some of the native Montanans talk about transplants. I came to Montana when I was nine years old to attend the Red Lodge Summer Ski Racing Camp. I fell in love with the mountains. The first hill I skied down was so steep, I could stand straight up and reach out and touch the side of the hill. It was a cornice really, but we skied on it anyway. Minnesota doesn't have hills like Montana. What a Montanan calls a hill would be a mountain in Minnesota. We skied on any hill that wasn't flat, we skied on a lot of flat land too. When I came home from that camp, I told my parents I was going to live in Montana someday.

I went back to Red Lodge many times after that. I worked hard at camp. We skied everyday until 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon, and then had dry land training in the early evening and on Saturday mornings. Dry land training consisted of running up hills/mountains, wind sprints, circuit training, push-ups, sit-ups, lifting rocks (i.e. natural weights), river bed running, five-mile runs and, generally, sweating a lot. It was rigorous. Skiing in the gates was much easier, we would have short water breaks between the five-mile runs and starting circuit training.

It was on one of these breaks when I got my period. I was 13 years old. It wasn't the first time I had it. When I got my period for the first time, I told my mother that I didn't want to be a girl anymore. Mom told me I would be able to have a baby and that it really wasn't so bad. She was trying to make me feel better. She said, "If you were a man, you'd have to shave everyday." I told her that if I was a man, I would grow a beard.

I just hated it so much, I kept hoping it would dry up and disappear, and then I would never have to think about it again. But it didn't work that way.

I never paid any attention to when it could be expected. I dreaded it and knew it would keep coming back month after month, so I didn't mark my calendar and I never knew when it would come. Consequently, I wasn't at all prepared to take care of it when it came during dry land training. I asked my friend Denise, who was a couple years older than me, what I could do. She gave me a tampon. This may seem like no big deal, but I didn't know how to use one. Yes, I had seen the fourth grade tapes and all on this stuff, but I was in such denial that this was even going to happen to me that I didn't pay any attention. One should pay attention. I had to tell Denise that I had never used one before. Denise's Mom was a nurse, so she was pretty cool about a lot of things.

Denise said she'd go into the bathroom with me and help me out. She opened it up and showed me how it worked. I kept poking it around and wasn't getting anywhere. I looked at her and told her there wasn't any hole in my body. I couldn't find it. Denise was just dying, laughing, shaking her head, but I couldn't get the stupid thing in. People were knocking on the door, waiting to use the bathroom. Finally, she said to me to just use my finger so I could figure out where the opening was and then put the tampon in. I was so surprised when I figured it out. I thought that I only had places for stuff to come out not anywhere where anything could go in. We must of been in that bathroom for almost an hour. There was a long line waiting when we came out and we got some pretty strange looks, but I felt so proud of myself and so grown up.

I think back on the sex education classes I had growing up and I was so misinformed. I was taught sex was just something you didn't talk about, mostly because the sex education teachers I had couldn't talk about it. In junior high, we labeled parts and didn't go into details. Most of us knew our parts by then. In high school, my male teacher told the class that if a girl made a pass or touched a male in any sexual way, she deserved whatever she got from the guy. I didn't ask any questions after that and I didn't learn much.

Today, when my students ask me about sex, I answer them and if I don't know the answers, I look them up. I've done several plays about pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. A friend told me I shouldn't do such serious stuff, to lighten up, but the issues are just too important. I want my students to be much better informed than I was.

Monologue 3

Recently, I took several of my students to a production here at the University. In the program, there was a question asking what your occupation was. For example, homemaker, student, teacher, etc. and as I read through it, I jokingly replied that I was all of the above.

Sometimes, I feel like a whirling dervish trying to accomplish everything on my list within a certain time deadline. This causes stress. The word, stress, has become common in our vocabulary. Katie came home from day care saying, "I'm so stressed out." I read somewhere that without stress, we'd all be dead. Right now, I'm just trying to find balance. It's like juggling. Sometimes it's so easy for me to do—when I'm more relaxed, and other times, I keep dropping the ball.

My own self talk can be debilitating. This voice in my head keeps saying, "you're so stupid, you're not very smart, you're out of shape, overweight, fat." I wonder how did I ever get my mental image and my body image so mixed up together. When did I connect my body weight with my mental capacities and successfulness? As if being overweight means you're not bright enough to take care of yourself or be in control. All of which effects self worth.

It's amazing how many people feel compelled to tell you that about yourself. The first time I realized something was wrong with my body was when I was told I had wrinkles on my knees because I was fat. I think I was nine years old at the time. I was told I'd end up like my Aunt Mickey. I love my aunt. She was big, but that never made me think less of her or think something was wrong with her. I knew there must be

something wrong with me because my brother, Mike, would always get chocolate milkshakes with bananas in them. He was skinny. I would get skim milk.

I was obviously not skinny, so I learned not to like my body very much. And even when I was in such good shape I could run seven miles a day and do 60 sit-ups in a minute, I still thought I was fat. There was a time when I weighed 113 pounds and believed I needed to be thinner. Now I struggle to really look at myself in the mirror. I know I am overweight and out of shape. Acceptance and change are so hard. I've accepted where I'm at and am working on change. It won't happen overnight like I'd like it to. I really wish there was a magic pill. I want to be strong and healthy again. I knew I was getting really sick when I heard myself saying that I wanted to die from cancer because at least I'd die thin. It was then that I knew I needed help. My grandmother used to tell me, "think about what you pray for because it just may come true."

Now my dad has cancer. It's funny how when you know someone who has such a disease, you see and hear the word everywhere. I don't want cancer and I don't want anyone else to have it. When I found out my dad had it, I just wanted to take a bat and smash as many windows as I could find. I was so angry. I couldn't even breathe. Now my dad is in the healing process. And when I'm struggling, I call him and he makes me laugh, helps me to put things into perspective, and reminds me to take one day at a time. Good things can come out of bad. And I think very carefully about what I pray for and I hope it does come true.

Second Song

King Jesus is all
My all and all
You know he'll answer me when I call
Walking by my side
I'm satisfied
King Jesus is all
My all and all

Well, I went out to praise the Lord, I got down on my knees, I prayed
my last prayer. You know the holy spirit met me there.
I stepped on a rock, the rock was solid
Oooh love of God came a tumbling down.
The reason that I know that he saved my soul, is I dug down deep and
I found pure gold
And He's all
My all in all.

Monologue 4

My grandfather's faith is a faith that I admire. He could back up his beliefs with scripture and stories. I don't remember him having any questions, but I imagine he must have had questions at some time in his life. It is only now that I can see this, how can one have answers if one doesn't have questions?

Among other occupations, Grandpa was a history teacher. He was fascinated by the Civil War. I remember as a young girl, I asked him if he fought in the Civil War—oh, I knew he couldn't have, but when he told his stories, they sounded so much like he had been there. It was like that with his faith, as if he just knew. Although I never sat in his class, I received some of his best teachings.

When I was 16, he baptized me in the Baptist church tradition of full emersion. The water was so cold that day, we were both turning blue. Grandpa died last January. Before he died, I sent him a letter and was able to tell him how much he meant to me, and I found the words to explain what it meant to me for him to be the one that baptized me. On that day the water was so cold I didn't want to go under, but I felt the water rush over my face and I could see my grandfather reaching for me and pulling me up. For a moment, time was suspended as if something very special was happening. When I stood up, I knew I had been baptized, and I know that someday my grandpa will be there to pull me through again. I never gave myself time to grieve my grandfather's death, but I celebrate his life and the time we spent together.

End Second Narration (Taped)

My dad has times when he just can't communicate very well. Something happens and his mood shifts. It can happen so fast. It was one of my father's mood swings that led me to this couch back in 1992.

I realized that I was 31 years old and I was still allowing myself to react as a child. I was blaming him for my reactions instead of looking at myself. I can run away and hide when things are not easy, but it is not in my nature to do so. Sooner or later, I will need to do what I must do. The strength I need is within me. Coming out of the couch was my re-birth.

Music up for dance dedicated to my parents, Prelude to Love.

Appendix 3 - Publicity

Presentation Card

**Have you seen Sarah
in her new yellow dress,
Dancing in a Circle of Light.
She seems to hear a music all her own.
Do you think our angel plays
a tune that only she can hear?**

Chloe Diane Doyle
circa Spring, 1962

A personal performance
by

Sarah DeGrandpre

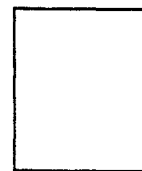
Thursday, July 14, 1994

7:30 p.m.

Masquer Theatre

Performing Arts (PART) Bldg.

University of Montana



Appendix 4 - Five Paragraph Samples

Pain

He didn't try to hurt me, but he could and he know how. He could zero in on the spot where you were most vulnerable and wipe you out by a simple word or two spoken. Not in anger, but in deliberate thought out patterns. That old children's rhyme that runs through my head, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me," doesn't ring true. Labels and names from those you love can be most painful and sharp in your memory. If you let them, they can destroy you, pick away at you until there is nothing left but a shredded mass, a blob, and you've become what was called. A stupid, fat, ugly, waste of time. So you hide these images and feelings in the back of your mind in hopes that people won't see how you really feel and what you believe. But it's there. If you get to feeling too good about yourself, he'll be there to remind you. To bring you back to what you are from his point of view. And yet, there's always a part of you that believes it. After all he loves you.

Fear

I felt the cold steel bar across my legs as the heat from the day was setting record highs. I looked around and saw the red, weak, rust cage and how high I was off the ground. The screaming to let us down permeated my head as my sweat-filled hands slipped and slipped down the bar, drawing me nearer to the red metal mesh. I turned to look at Sheri and saw that I was hanging above her. Sheri, who was always taller than me. My chest at her eye level beat hard and fast. She spoke to me quietly in a forced calm voice. I told her I was slipping and I knew the cage would not hold me if I fell into it. The cage so red and flimsy. A wire mesh cage held in place for looks, not safety. Sheri's voice repeating over and over again, as if her mantra could hold me in place. Her face was white when it should have been as red as the cage with blood flowing to her head. What was only minutes seemed like an eternity, a slow precise moment in time. Then the noise exploded as the wheels rolled metal over metal and I felt my body crash down into the hard seat as we whirled around and came to an abrupt stop. Upright, shaken, and with blistered hands, I walked away, fell to the ground and laughed.

Resentment

This woman in class is driving me crazy. She's bothering the shit out of me. I'm ready to go over, grab her neck and just shake her. I'm not a violent person, at least I'd like to think I'm not. Why is she here? Instead I shake my table and wonder if I'm the only one who is affected and having these reactions. I look around the room and see others response when she is speaking. I'm having a hard time ignoring her. She won't shut up and I'm distracted enough with all the clutter going through my head with wannas and haveto dos. I keep shooting glares at her, but my looks aren't being received. I shouldn't be so bothered. It's not my problem, but it's annoying. I don't understand where she is coming from and perhaps, that's the problem. I want to tell her to grow up. She doesn't have to be clinging to her neighbor. Her comments are out of line. With every advertisement of a man, she drools. I know I'm embellishing and not being fair, but Come on! I try and understand this woman's feelings, but I'm not succeeding. She walks in and out. She's sleeping now. And the assignment is . . . what is it about this woman that bothers me so much?

Contentment

Wedged between my husband and daughter. I crawl semiconscious out of bed like a caterpillar emerging from its larvae. My body is stiff and full of sleep. My eyes are fighting to remain closed. I take a few deep breathes and try to get ready for this new day. Sleep is not something that comes easily to this household, nor for me is it particularly comfortable. My two-year-old son, Michael, rises at the crack of dawn each day afraid that he might miss something spectacular if he is sleeping, and who like his five-year-old sister, Katie, refuses to take naps anymore. He just keeps going and going as if he's the model for the "Energizer bunny," until he comes to a complete stop, falls asleep where he is and needs to be recharged. It is my two-year-old who beckons me from my deep, still sleep. Katie crawled into bed with us sometime around four a.m. and in that semiconscious state, I could only raise my head to see the clock. I could not will myself to escort her back to her own bed. Sleep is too precious a commodity that doesn't come often and I am tired of playing musical beds. Morning comes far too early for this game. I should be thankful that there are only three beds. Katie wants to go on sleep-overs, or so she says. I know she is much too young, but I use this idea as incentive anyway. I tell her she can't sleep over at a friend's house until she can sleep the whole night through in her own bed. It can't just be for special occasions like the Easter bunny or Santa Claus's arrival. She said okay with the gee whiz type of groan, but in the morning there she was again. I know it's my fault. I'm not insistent enough, but somehow as I turn over stiff and straight as if my body is skewered on its own rotisserie, I realize how much I love this little girl whose arm is wrapped around me. She'll be grown up in just a few years. Sleeping will come later. Right now, I'm raising children and I'm thankful that at this moment my son can't climb out of his crib and join us. On that day, I'll be stuck in one of the local hotel chains so I can have one night of blissful, uninterrupted, worry free, comfortable sleep and go on dreaming. I'll probably hate it. My own body will be so programmed, I'll rise at the crack of dawn wondering where my children are.

Satisfaction

Sunday night *deja vous*. It's not *deja vous*. It's happened before. The ritual after sunset every Sunday night for as long as I can remember since becoming a housewife. That dreaded word that conjures up evil images of a woman wearing dark sun glasses and a scarf tied back over dirty hair, chopping up chickens with a butcher knife from the back lot prop cabinet of "Psycho." It's the Sunday night laundry folding marathon! Yes, I've sat here before in front of a mindless television program folding these same clothes week after week. It's real *deja vous*. My mind is not playing tricks with my eyes, nor is this experience some psychic phenomenon, or perhaps, it is. I keep coming back to this same laundry pile week after week. Sometimes it feels as if I really know what Prometheus felt like to have the same thing happen time after time to him. And yet, it's my role. I am comfortable with it. I even revel in complaining about it as if that is also part of the role which I play so well. I take a certain perverse pleasure in doing it all myself and knowing that I do the job. I can even do it with my eyes closed, as I have experimented a time or two just to keep my sanity. And when the marathon is over, I know I've won . We all need to win occasionally.

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