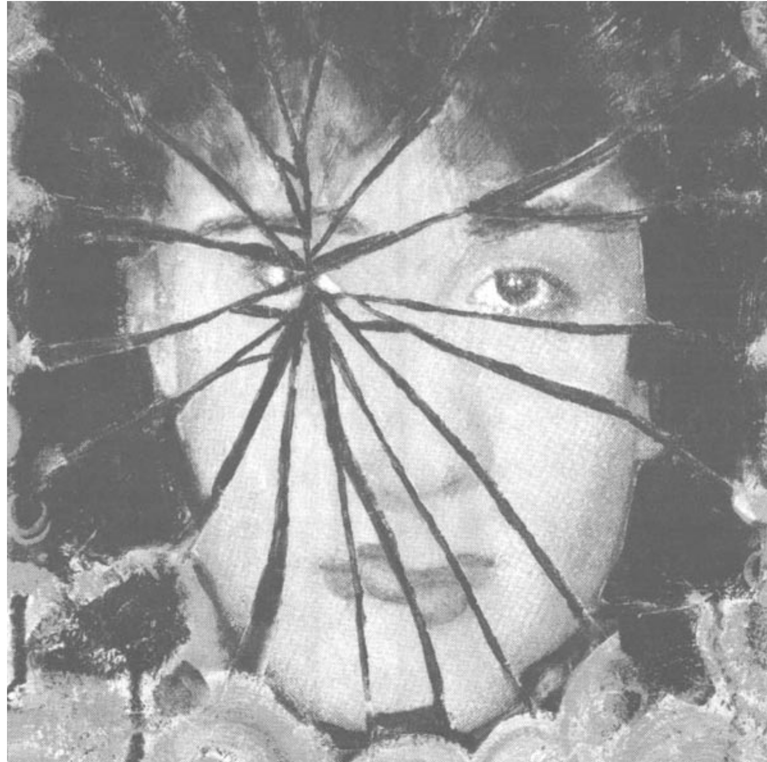

The Mirror Cracked

A story of Vynette Hamanne and her lengthy encounter with Dr. Diane Humenansky, A St. Paul Psychiatrist

On her first day in court Vynnette Hamanne wore a brown cotton smock printed with small white and yellow flowers and sat in the back of the courtroom. She remained there throughout opening arguments, needlepointing something white and complicated. On her left sat her 17-year-old daughter, Adeana. On her right was her mother, and next to her Hamanne's husband, Ken, always in the aisle seat, a square presence in his gray suit.

Hamanne walked slowly to the stand when her lawyers called her, working her way past family, a handful of spectators, a couple of reporters, and half a dozen attorneys. She'd spent some time getting ready for this moment, the first day of testimony in what was supposed to be a historic trial. She looked exactly like a precocious eighth-grader---eyebrows raised, mouth carefully straight, an assured look hiding the anxiety before a crucial exam. Hamanne answered the questions deliberately, articulately, in a soft, clipped voice that was barely audible over the hum of a fan.

Six and a half years ago, Vynnette Hamanne began seeing a psychiatrist to deal with her anxieties over a move. Three years later she left therapy with a diagnosis of multiple personality disorder caused by child sexual abuse that was purported to include rape by her relatives, ritual murder, forced child breeding, and cannibalism. She had fantastic, unspeakable nightmares that kept her awake at night and a debilitating medical condition that had grown worse; she lost her job and spent almost $150,000 on an intensifying course of therapy punctuated by psychiatric hospital stays.

Her psychiatrist, Dr. Diane Humenansky, is the object of six lawsuits filed by former patients who claim that she helped them to remember spectacular incidents of abuse that never occurred. Hamanne's was the first to reach trial. The story of her life emerged slowly in the small Ramsey County District courtroom over the next seven weeks, grinding through half of June and all of July. The trial unearthed anecdotes, recollections, chunks of medical records, and excerpts from tape-recorded therapy sessions. It was an enactment of one of the biggest controversies of the decade--about good and evil, sex and violence, childhood and memory. By the time it was over a jury decided that Hamanne and her family were entitled to $2.6 million for suffering incurred at the hands of her healer.

Vynnette Ann Steinbach was born on her grandparents' farm near Faribault in 1953. Vivian Steinbach's husband had been off to the Korean War for four months when her daughter was born, and Vivian's mother became convinced that she'd gotten pregnant by another lover. When Vynnette was 12, her grandmother took her aside to ask if she knew who her real father was. She was so frightened she didn't say a word to anyone.

Ralph Steinbach came back from Korea when Vynnette was 14 months old, and the family moved to the big city. Ralph tried college before settling into a construction job. Two more sisters came, and a brother. Hamanne's childhood and adolescence took what a psychologist who testified in the case called an "almost too quiet" course. She got good grades, rated high on IQ tests, and had the usual arguments with her parents over staying out late and helping around the house. Once, when she heard her mom and dad fighting, she hid in her bedroom closet; she rarely heard yelling and thought the world was corning to an end.

She married her high school sweetheart at 21. Her husband, Ron, was going to college and preparing to inherit his father's corporation. She worked full-time and tried to run a spit-shine household. Ron gave her lists of things to do for the day, week, month, and year. She learned to socialize, how to behave at formal dinners and drink wine and liqueur socially. After a year, Ron's parents decided Vynnette was not a suitable wife for a man of their son's stature. He dropped her off at her parents' house one night with her purse, her knitting, and 20 cents.

The accounts of the Hamanne family and Dr. Diane Humenansky and of their relationship contained in this story were taken substantially from court records and court testimony.

The divorce left her depressed and convinced she'd never marry again. When an Air Force man proposed a year later, she accepted and they moved to the Philippines. This husband, a man named Kit, was into drugs. He drank more than she was used to and sometimes hit her. She came to think of herself as an alcoholic, a drug addict (she'd experimented with some prescription samples from a salesman friend), at the very least codependent--a 'junkie personality,' as hospital records noted she once called herself.

In 1978 they moved back to the Twin Cities, where Vynnette got a job testing drugs at 3M. Adeana was born that year. Meanwhile Kit continued to drink and have affairs, convinced her to have a hysterectomy, and finally suggested that his girlfriend and her two children move in with them. Vynnette asked him to leave the house instead.

Ken Hamanne, an Air Force superior of Kit's in the Philippines, had come to visit the couple in Minnesota while the marriage was falling apart. He started dating Vynnette a few months after her divorce was final in 1980, and within Weeks he convinced her to marry him and move to North Carolina.

Vynnette had seen therapists and taken antidepressants after her divorce from Ron, and again in the Philippines. She had undergone chemical-dependency treatment twice--once with Kit, and a second time after taking some codeine tablets during a tough weekend---and was hospitalized once for what she termed 'anxiety.' Now she was jobless and living in a trailer, a full-time mother for the first time. Stresses were piling up: Kit began making noises about filing for custody, and Vynnette had a breast cancer scare. She started losing sleep. She saw vivid flashes of color and occasionally glimpsed phantoms out of the comer of her eye: a dog running by the highway, small animals on the floor of her car. She wondered if she was going crazy. By October, two months after she'd arrived in North Carolina, a base doctor suggested that she check herself into Cumberland Psychiatric Hospital in Fayetteville. Her admission papers say that when asked to express three wishes, "the patient stated 1) that I wasn't here 2) that I wish I were dead

and 3) that I want to be entered in a pool tournament."

The admitting psychiatrist diagnosed Vynnette's problem as "undifferentiated schizophrenia," a condition that would require a long and expensive in-patient stay. (The Cumberland hospital was later investigated for fraud, and the psychiatrist lost his license.) For the next six weeks, Vynnette talked to a psychologist about her fears of being abandoned, her horror of arguments, her seething anger at Kit. According to hospital records, the schizophrenia diagnosis was ruled out by the end of her six-week stay; tests and therapy sessions revealed little more than run-of-the-mill troubles and some incomplete coping skills.

In September 1983 Vynnette was hospitalized for lower back pain, and the military physician asked a psychiatrist to see her in view of her history with "substance abuse and major affective disorder." She told the doctor that she'd been having seizures and had lost consciousness a few times, her sister, she added, had died recently in her sleep at age 25. The psychiatrist gave her medications.

When Ken reached his 20-year mark in the Air Force in 1988, they moved back to Minnesota to be close to Vynnette's family. She was on Xanax, an addictive anxiety drug whose side effects include irritability and memory impairment, and she worried about quitting in the midst of a big transition. She looked in the Yellow Pages to locate a psychiatrist "before things got crazy." The first doctor she found who was taking on new patients was Diane Bay Humenansky.

Humenansky is a broad-shouldered woman with a pile of chestnut hair whose weight seems to push her face down into a frown of abiding annoyance. With her square jaw and wide mouth, she cut an imposing, even slightly threatening, figure when she first stepped to the witness stand. But her eyes were dull, and stayed that way through most of her testimony. As the weeks wore on she seemed to grow smaller, and the red splotches on her cheeks became more pronounced. She often brought a friend to court to sit with her.

Born and raised in Detroit, Humenansky got top grades in college and was accepted into Wayne State Medical School before completing her B.A. There weren't many women in medical school in the late 1950s, and she recalled being told that ladies especially didn't belong in psychiatry. She pursued it anyway and started practicing in 1963. She moved around a lot, opening and closing several offices in five other states before settling in Minnesota in 1988. Along the way she was married and divorced three times, at one point losing custody of her children. She told her patients later that the case was fixed, and the male judge biased against her. Around the time of one of the divorces she lost much of her hair, and she wore a wig ever after.

In testimony and court documents, she alluded to a history of run-ins with male psychiatrists who ridiculed her and her diagnoses. In one affidavit she reported losing her staff privileges at United Hospital in St. Paul over things like "inappropriate treatment of patients, writing prescriptions for a ninety-day supply of potentially lethal medication, and the legibility of my handwriting." The suspension was eventually overturned; Humenansky attributed it to the complaints of "one or two nurses who had an agenda other than quality medical care."

She voiced similar suspicions about an investigation by the Minnesota Board of Medical Practice, which looked into a dozen complaints against her in 1992 and eventually ordered an examination to determine whether she was fit to practice medicine. A consultant to the board had suggested that she might have a "mental impairment." She refused to comply with the order and ended up going to court over the matter. A memorandum written by her lawyer, Philip Villaume, called the examination an obnoxious intrusion....in the tradition of the re-education camps of North Vietnam and the thought control of Stalin." Humenansky, he wrote, was working at the cutting edge of presently accepted and politically correct practice in a "highly subjective and politicized" field. "There is a tremendous danger to freedom, he went on, when the State attempts to enforce its orthodoxy by the use of medical authorities attributing mental instability to those with conflicting views."

If Humenansky, as the memorandum notes, didn't want to reveal secret thoughts, sexual history, and private dreams to the medical board, she was more open with her clients. Several, including Vynnette Hamanne, testified that in sessions she would discuss her divorces, the antidepressants she was taking, her feelings about men and life in general. Taped excerpts from treat-ment sessions showed her talking about her father, her mother, her fear of hospitals, her decision to leave a bad marriage and "get help."

To Humenansky this kind of sharing was what any feeling human would do, especially one who spent her workdays listening to people's most intimate troubles. And her responsibility was even greater, she figured, because of the work she'd chosen to do. She had come to specialize in the treatment of women who had been abused, sexually and otherwise. Humenansky believed she was one of few therapists willing to confront the horrible burdens so many women carried inside themselves. It was her duty to listen, believe, and unearth dark secrets.

Humenansky: *They beat you, didn't they. Who beat you--Grandma.*
Hamanne: *... eggs.*
Humenansky: *Washed eggs! Washed eggs? I don't get it. Tbat's funny to me.*
Hamanne: *The chickens are messy.*
Humenansky: *Chickens are messy--*
Hamanne: *They poop on eggs and you have to wash them.*
Humenansky: *They poop on eggs?*
Hamanne: *--have to clean...*
Humenansky: *I don't know if I'd want to go to a farm. This is getting--*
Hamanne: *A lot of work...*
Humenansky: *So punishment... You didn't care about that.*
Hamanne: *They can't hurt me... I don't care.*
Humenansky: *Yes, you do care. You're trying to be very--you 're trying to say you don't care. How do you wash an egg?*
Hamanne: *You put it in water. Humenansky: And what if it breaks?*
Hamanne: *Then you're in trouble...*
Humenansky: *Oh, my God... I'm so glad I was born in the city, Detroit, Michigan... Holy mackerel, how old were you ? Four? Hamanne: Four or five.*
Humenansky: *They made little kids do this? This is child labor. Oh, my goodness. Dear God. Man.*
Hamanne: *But they didn't hurt me though.*

"If you're out of your mind in another culture or quite disturbed or impotent or anorexic," notes psychologist James Hillman, one of the few professionals who has openly challenged the prevailing practice of therapy, "you look at what you've been eating, who's been casting spells on you, what taboo you've crossed, what you haven't done right, when you last missed reverence to the Gods or didn't take part in the dance, broke some tribal custom.... It would never, never be what happened to you with your mother and your father 40 years ago. Only our culture uses that model."

It was Freud who popularized the therapeutic excavation of childhood. Practicing in late 19th-century Vienna, he shocked his Victorian contemporaries with ideas that seemed revolutionary then: Childhood is messy. Sexuality shapes the identity of children. Families are psychic war zones. Early in his career, Freud discovered that a lot of his women patients--he didn't treat many men--talked of sexual violation by male relatives. After chewing on this for a while, Freud declared that his patients' stories were actually fantasies, wishful thinking generated by a child's natural attraction to the opposite-sex parent.

From then on, and straight through Diane Humenansky's training, psychiatry was dominated by Freudian concepts. Women, who always made up the lion's share of the clientele, were psychoanalyzed to discover that they had poor toilet training or secretly desired their fathers. "hysteria" was the label of choice for many of their afflictions.

Therapy underwent a boom of sorts in the 1970s. The traditional rationale for psychoanalysis--that mental and emotional troubles were typical and talk therapy a way to overcome them--went mass market. Self-help books and groups proliferated, and a whole new category of counselors emerged, many not academically trained but determined to make a difference.

In 1974, poet Ellen Bass was handed a crumpled piece of paper by a student in her creative-writing class. "Her writing was so vague, so tentative, that I wasn't sure what she was trying to say, but I sensed that it was important. Gently, I encouraged her to write more. Slowly she revealed her story. In pieces, on bits of paper, she shared the pain of her father's assaults, and I listened." Bass

Before she broke off her therapy with Humenansky, Vynette Hamanne had produced over 100 "alter" personalities and memories of satanic cults.

went on to listen to many more women, becoming overwhelmed by what seemed like an epidemic: Behind almost every one of those comfortable American family facades lurked unspeakable secrets.

In 1988--the year Hamanne first consulted Humenansky--Bass and a former client of hers named Laura Davis published *The Courage to Heal,* a self-help book that's since sold 750,000 copies and is widely referred to as the bible of the incest-survivor movement. "If you've been sexually abused," Bass and Davis wrote, "you're not alone. One in three girls, and one out of seven boys, are sexually abused by the time they reach the age of eighteen." Sexual abuse included fondling and rape as well as being "bathed in away that felt intrusive," "objectified and ridiculed about your body," and "encouraged or goaded into sex you didn't really want." And, they added, "if you are unable to remember any specific instances like the ones mentioned above but still have a feeling that something abusive happened to you, it probably did."

In its first chapter, titled "Taking Stock," *The Courage to Heal* offered readers five pages of questions: "Do you feel different from other people?" "Do you hate yourself?" "Can you accomplish things you set out to do?" "Do you have trouble expressing your feelings?" "Do you ever use alcohol, drugs, or food in a way that concerns you?" "Do you enjoy using your body in activities such as dance, sports, or hiking?" Every yes, it suggested, could be a signpost guiding the way to the hidden abuses that were keeping you unhappy.

"As far as I'm concerned, my whole life was stolen from me," one survivor wrote. "I didn't get to be who I could have been. I didn't get the education I should have gotten when I was young. I married too early. I hid behind my husband. I didn't make contact with other people. I haven't had a rich life.... And that makes me very angry."

Or, as another put it, "If I had had a comfortable childhood, I could have been anything. "

Humenansky: *Remember, I suspected this wasn't a broomstick.*

Hamanne: *I don't remember.*

Humenansky: *I suspect it as a penis.*

Hamanne: *I don't know.*

Humenansky: *Why did you put broomstick there? [They're looking at drawings Vynnette's made.]*

Hamanne: *Inside me?*

Humenansky: *Did they want you to see that it's down there?*

Hamanne: *I saw.*

Humenansky: *.... You've made several, you see, I'm watching everything you're doing, okay? You've made several shrugs here, you've changed your expression in the last about five minutes.*

Hamanne: *I don't understand.*

Humenansky: *Well I think these are all periods of abuse in your very early childhood. And they all involve your throat. To one extent or another, I suspect that if it was a broomstick it was followed by a penis, if it was a penis, it could have been followed by a broomstick.*

Hamanne: *Why would anybody do that?*

Humenansky: *Why would anybody do that? Well they're sick. They've been abused themselves. This is the way it shows it on that last television thing.... A child who is abused sexually becomes.... an adult who abuses his own children.... I think that you've had several, I don't know how many, I mean, one of my patients told me that she's had five episodes of sexual abuse. OK?*

Hamanne: *I can't believe that*

Humenansky: *Well... it's happened to so many people it's scary. And you know there's nobody to treat these people. Not enough to... It's just, you know what it does to me? It scares me. Because the magnitude is so great Do you realize that almost any president of the United States has probably been abused or has been an abuser. And l just sit there, and sit there, and I think, Oh my God, you*

know, I'm not laughing, I'm just saying, you know, holy mackerel I've got patients coming to me. I've got patients telling me psychiatrists abused them. I've got patients telling me doctors abuse then Husbands are raping, I mean, boyfriends are raping girlfriends. It's just, it's like a disease. And men condone it.

Hamanne: *Can I ask you a few questions.*

Humenansky: *Do I sound like a I'm a fool? I don't think I am. It's just that my eyes are really opening up and sometimes I wish I could shut them. Yeah, but I think the only way is to learn and knowledge is power. Yes, that's right…*

When Hamanne first went to see Humenansky, she didn't say anything about sexual abuse, according to the doctor's treatment notes. Chances are, however, that the doctor asked her, and more than once. In talking with the state medical board's consultant in 1992, Humenansky cited one professional who claimed "that any woman walking in the door has been sexually abused. So I ask those questions of my patients. So far, 100 percent of the response has been 'Yes, I was abused.'... It's like Anita Hill. No one wants to believe them. I give them the right to talk about it, They know I'll listen to them."

Meanwhile Hamanne asked Humenansky to continue her medications, and the two agreed on weekly therapy sessions. Within two months, Hamanne began talking about having been "tortured" by her grandmother. Not much later, the therapist diagnosed her as having post-traumatic stress syndrome, a condition first diagnosed in Vietnam veterans, but more recently applied to survivors of child abuse.

According to the logic of the sessions, "If I didn't remember 10, 15 instances of second grade, then I must be missing a chunk of second grade," Hamanne testified. "She told me anytime I couldn't put together a chunk of time, say from Thanksgiving to Christmas, I would be missing that chunk of time."

From ancient days there have always been tales of people "losing time." Freud gave the amnesia plot a new spin, declaring that everyone possessed an unconscious id containing the things one couldn't or wouldn't think about. Troubling childhood memories, especially, would be "repressed" into this mental closet. It was up to psychiatrists to interpret the id's visible traces (such as dream imagery) and bring forth their hidden, often sexual, meaning. Thus the memories could be relived and finally integrated into a more complete and healthy self.

Of course not all the child-abuse reports that poured forth starting in the mid-1970s came from repressed and subsequently recovered memory. Many people had always remembered their abuse, they told their therapists, but they never wanted to talk about it. But an increasing number of people--especially white, college-educated women between 25 and 50--came forward saying they hadn't known they were survivors until they entered therapy. "Many Women don't have memories, and some never get memories," Bass and Davis reassured them in *The Courage to Heal.* "This doesn't mean they weren't abused.... If you think you were abused, and your life shows the symptoms, you probably were."

"I obsessed for about a year on trying to remember," wrote one 38-year-old survivor who described her relationship with her father as emotionally incestuous." "And then I got tired of sitting around talking about what I couldn't remember. I thought all right, let's act as if... I'm going with the circumstantial evidence, and I'm working on healing myself. I go to these incest groups, and I tell people, 'I don't have any pictures,' and then I go on and talk all about my father, and nobody ever says, 'You don't belong here.'"

This opened up what was effectively a whole new market in psychotherapy. Some therapists used pictures, stream-of-consciousness writing, and hypnosis to prime the unconscious pump. They encouraged listening to your body--aches, pains, funny feelings--or pointed to! odd and symbolic fears: If you hated cucumbers, it might be a clue to forced oral sex. Somehow, somewhere, the memories would come. "Every experience we've had since birth has been recorded and tucked away safely in our brains," advised a book called *Unlocking the Secrets of Your Childhood Memories.* "Like the most sophisticated computer in the world, the brain retrieves [memories] we need when we need them."

Many patients' computers indeed revved up. Images formed in their minds. Stories came out, often growing more detailed as time went by. In the face of skeptics, many therapists held to what seemed a common sense argument:. No one would make something like this up. Courts and politicians took the same view. Starting in the mid-1980s, a growing number of survivors sued the people they now remembered as abusers. One of the most famous cases was that of George Franklin, whose adult daughter recovered "memories" of his raping and killing her best friend when she was 9. Franklin was convicted despite evidence that some of his daughter's key memories matched not the known details of the unsolved murder but the inaccurate news reports of it. A California judge threw out Franklin's conviction in 1993.

For a while, many survivor lawsuits stalled because the statute of limitations had run out on the original crimes. That changed when many state legislatures--Minnesota's was among the first--passed laws extending the statute of limitations for child abuse until two or three years after the memory was first recovered. Now hundreds of cases were filed, often with the encouragement of therapists. Some lawyers went so far as to make claims against homeowners' insurance policies.

Those policies generally don't cover willful acts, but the novel logic was that insurers might be held liable for neglect by the "silent partner" to the abuse, usually the victim's mother. To date, according to the Philadelphia-based False Memory Syndrome Foundation, whose members include accused families, some 800 "repressed-memory lawsuits" have been filed, 90 percent of them in civil courts. Less than a quarter have been resolved.

Only hard science has proven consistently unfriendly to the recovered-memory movement. To date, not a single research project has proven that people can repress, and recover, trauma-tic memories. Studies have shown that people are perfectly capable of forgetting a lot of things--or at least not talking about them--and that something called "organic amnesia" can happen following sudden trauma on the order of car crashes. But for most survivors of documented horrors, research found that the opposite applies: Far from forgetting what took place in concentration camps or during war, famine, or kidnappings, people can't seem to stop thinking about it.

When it comes specifically to childhood sexual abuse, only a handful of studies have yielded suggestions that the memory can be entirely repressed. The most famous one was conducted by Linda Meyer-Williams at the University of New Hampshire. In 1990 and 91 she interviewed more than 100 women who, according to hospital records from some 17 years earlier, had been brought in for sexual abuse between the ages of 10 months and 12 years. Thirty-eight percent didn't report the abuse when Meyer-Williams interviewed them. But while the findings have been hailed as conclusive proof of "repression or some other extreme kind of 'forgetting' defense," they're scientifically dubious: Meyer-Williams didn't report how many of her subjects were under 3 years old when the alleged abuse occurred, and most scientists are convinced that it's impossible to have specific memories from before that age. Nor did she ask the question a second time, a method that led all of the subjects in another study to say they remembered the abuse after all.

Conversely, however, scientists have been able to show that people can vividly recall things that never happened. In general, memory research holds that when we "remember" something, we're actually constructing a story that encompasses details from many sources: concrete recollections of the moment in question; family stories; pictures; background knowledge ("what it looked like at that house"); and generic information ("what usually happens in these situations"). Numerous studies have proven that with sufficient prodding, many people (up to a quarter of those studied) can be made to "remember" getting lost at a mall or spilling the punch bowl at a wedding while they were children, even though it never happened.

When told as much, many of them will get angry and insist that it did.

Several months into therapy, Humenansky began to notice something odd about Vynnette Hamanne. Her voice and demeanor would change during sessions. Some days she would wear pants, others a dress. She'd talk about knitting, then gardening, a whole array of handicrafts she enjoyed. Humenansky already knew that her patient was missing significant chunks of her childhood," and that there had been abuse. Now she began to suspect that what she had here was a case of multiple-personality disorder--the ultimate, and most therapeutically challenging, form of repression.

This, too, was an ancient concept. In tribal societies, spirits spoke through the mouths of shamans; in the Middle Ages, millions of people were found to be possessed by demons. And in the decades after Freud, therapists dabbled with a variety of diagnoses involving "split personalities." In 1957, a pair of therapists named Corbett Thigpen and Harvey Checkley published *The Three Faces of Eve,* an account of their treatment of a 27-year-old secretary who entered therapy complaining of headaches for which physicians could find no explanation. A few months into the sessions, and after some disturbing incidents like shopping sprees she couldn't remember, the patient suddenly stiffened and her face turned blank. After a few minutes there was "a quick reckless smile. In a bright unfamiliar voice that sparkled, the woman said: 'Hi there, Doc!'" It turned out that behind the prim, proper; and Protestant Eve White lurked the cute, flirtatious Eve Black, who each Saturday pulled out her dancing shoes and tore up the town.

The therapists diagnosed Eve with MPD, and the story was eventually made into a movie, as was *Sybil,* another bestseller published 16 years later. This patient had lots more personalities--at least 17, which revealed themselves gradually over a multiyear analysis. And her story had an element that would prove crucial in the MPD movement: She'd split as a result of horrendous sexual and physical abuse by her mother.

MPD was first included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)--a catalog of medical symptoms that generally governs which conditions insurers will cover--in 1980. That helped spark what soon looked like a full-fledged epidemic: Fewer than 200 cases of the disorder had been described in the literature prior to that time, but more than 25,000 people were diagnosed with it during the following decade. Many of those new multiples were incest survivors, often ones who only recently had discovered their memories. They had, their therapists reasoned, avoided going visibly crazy by "dissociating" part of themselves from what was happening. Over time they'd refined this coping mechanism into a high art, developing "alters" that could deal with various parts of life (family, work, sex, dreams) while other, hidden parts would hold the pain and the memories.

Where the first best-selling multiple-personality stories had shown personalities introducing themselves full-blown, therapists now began to diagnose far more subtle cases. Variations in dress, voice, handwriting, and mannerisms could all betray; hidden personalities. In addition to standard alters, patients reported finding within themselves historical figures, animals, stuffed toys, clouds, or beings from other planets.

The Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry contains this warning: "[I]t is important to recognize that no one displays a truly consistent personality. Given a tendency to dissociate and forget actions that people would not like to recall, it is by no means strange for someone to say, 'I could not have done that. I don't recall it.'.... If the patient accepts the invitation and displays what appears to be an alter personality, there is no guarantee that what follows reflects a true dissociative alter personality or... is an ego fragment the patient wishes to make known to the therapist. If the therapist then asks the patient, 'What is your name?' and a different name is given, which the therapist accepts and legitimizes, the basis for a multiple personality has been created where one may not have existed or at least did not fully exist."

To some psychiatrists, what this means is that most if not all multiple-personality cases are "iatrogenic," pathologies caused by the treatment itself. Relatively few therapists diagnose most cases of MPD; some have made it their specialty. "It's like specializing in an infectious disease when you're the carrier," University of Minnesota psychology professor William Grove testified. "You see lots of cases *because* you're the carrier." Some MPD therapists report a sense of horror shot through with excitement--a rush not unlike the thrill experienced by big-game hunters.

Humenansky diagnosed Vynette Hamanne as a multiple in June 1989, around the time her patient read *Sybil.* Over the following months Hamanne plunged into her MPD work--reading, keeping a daily journal, listening again and again to her taped therapy sessions. She joined a group of half a dozen or so women who all saw Humenansky and who all bore

the same diagnosis. (All of the six women now suing Humenansky were in the same group.) And she showed her "people," more and more of them, to her family.

"There was one personality that liked me a lot," Ken testified. "That was Crystal. She was in her 30s. That was like a boyfriend/girlfriend kind of thing. We had a lot of fun together.... We'd laugh, we'd go out to eat." Then there was Elizabeth Ann, who didn't like me at all. She was in her 30s as well. Very efficient, secretary type, very organized. Like someone who's in charge of the office."

There were alters who just sat and rocked, silently, and some who were children. Adeana, who was 11 when the switching began, remembered 4-year-old Elizabeth, who liked to watch cartoons and go out in the yard to play. She also met David and Nellie, who were "basically my mothers. When I fell and scraped my knee, they kissed it. They were the caretakers." She knew Crystal, who "liked to dress up and loved to cook," and Evangeline, who "ranted and raved if someone gave her the wrong change at the gas station."

As more personalities emerged, Adeana stopped trying to keep track. "When there's almost a hundred of them coming and going all the time," she testified, "I couldn't pick one out as being my mom. I was embarrassed to bring friends home. I didn't know who she was more than half the time. "

"And she'd get offended when I called her Mom and her mom personalities weren't out. The teenagers [inside her] in particular didn't like that. They hated me. I got yelled at a lot. For a long time, I thought my Mom just didn't care about me anymore.... I used to always give my parents hugs and kisses good-night. One night I went up to her to do that, and mom put her hands up and took a step back and said 'don't touch me.'"

Friends likewise noticed the change. Julie Borlaug, who had known Vynnette before she married Ken, said her friend had always been "someone who seemed to know all the answers." Now she was withdrawn, confused, anxious. Once, in the middle of a conversation, Vynnette's voice became high-pitched, her manner playful and childlike. Borlaug was "talking to a 5-year-old." They saw less of each other after that.

About four months after first being diagnosed, Hamanne called Humenansky at home one night. She was afraid she might hurt herself and had called the police, but ran away when they showed up. Humenansky suggested that Ken bring his wife over, and watched her client "proceed to go into Crystal, George, David, Roberta, Elizabeth, Anna, Annette, and Nett. [It] seemed like there was a mutiny."

This was a normal multiple-personality crisis, and Humenansky knew how to deal with it. You had to get the patient into a safe setting. Eventually the memories causing the dissociation would be revealed. "I talked with her longer and longer," Humenansky wrote in a record of the session, "and Nett came out and was very angry, but wouldn't talk with me much. And then a small child came out." The child drew a picture of a wall, and Humenansky sensed that they were on the verge of a breakthrough. She checked her patient into St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul to continue this critical phase of treatment.

Soon "Nett" revealed that as a young girl, she had taken lunch to her grandfather in a cornfield, where he raped her "by sticking his penis in her mouth and her vagina.... The patient seemed to have some relief in telling this, but I did not feel this was the full story. The patient has no delusions or hallucinations, and her judgment is fairly intact, although she is unable to control herself until she gets this material out."

"Do I sound like a fool?" Dr. Diane Humenansky asked Hamanne in one therapy transcript introduced at the trial. "I don't think I am."

Humenansky grew close to her patients as they navigated the uncharted waters of multiplicity and sex abuse. After all, she knew some of their troubles from personal experience; the Board of Medical Practice report notes that she told patients she had been "abused as a child and as an adult." At one point, Hamanne testified, the doctor told her that after watching a program by pop psychologist John Bradshaw, she'd discovered multiplicity within herself--though, unlike her clients, she had been able to recognize it and immediately integrate.

A few months after Humenansky started seeing Hamanne, she was asked to leave her group practice; no one was specific about the reasons. A group of her patients helped with the move, toting her furniture and copying medical records after hours. For some time after that, sessions were held at Humenansky's house. Doctor and patient had dinner at each other's homes; when Humenansky saw all Vynnette's craft projects around the house, she said it was further evidence of multiplicity.

Another patient, Leane Gruebel, testified that she cleaned out the doctor's closets, arranged her wigs, cleaned her son's room, and generally "organized her household." Gruebel gave Humenansky massages in exchange for therapy sessions; the doctor testified that she consented to this arrangement because Gruebel threatened to kill herself if she couldn't find a way to pay.

Fellow professionals, of course, called all these things "boundary violations," and they had no trouble documenting specific instances. In 1992, during the Board of Medical Practice investigation, the doctor happily admitted to things like giving food from her office refrigerator to a patient who had none in the house, helping to fly another to the West Coast, and buying lunch for a third. "I'm a human first and a doctor second," she explained. "If someone is starving, I can't get through... I didn't realize everyone was looking at everyone's boundaries and had thingies [sic]. I had been alone in practice, elsewhere, never with others, so I had no problems before."

As her practice grew more intense, Humenansky got as wrapped up in therapy as her patients did. Hamanne said the doctor "would call morning, noon, and night and tell me to watch channel such-and-so because there's a program on multiples, *Donahue* or something... She gave me the cues on *Oprah,* other talk show programs that dealt with lesbian activity, child abuse, spousal abuse. She said that anything that bothered us or revolted us was probably something that had happened to us."

Humenansky denied this, but she acknowledged taking a lot of what she knew from the pop press and media: She knew Ellen Bass had no medical training, but trusted her work because "I heard her talk on shows [like *Oprah]* and I heard her respond to questions about what she did. " She talked on the Phone several times" to the author *of Sybil,* who told her that thousands of multiple-personality cases were popping up all over the country. She talked about "maybe writing a book and stuff," or starting an MPD institute.

In a sense, her practice was already starting to feel like a self-enclosed universe. Hamanne and three other patients all testified at trial that the doctor kept saying that only she could help them, that they would either integrate their personalities or go crazy and be locked up in state institutions. (Humenansky denied that she said this.) Leane Gruebel testified that she relinquished custody of her son on Humenansky's advice.

Hamanne said the doctor often told her that her polychondritis--a rare autoimmune disease that was causing her excruciating pain and might, according to doctor, kill her--was a symptom of her mental condition, and that only if she integrated would she be cured in both body and soul. And, she testified, Humenansky warned her not to have too much to do with her family: As long as she couldn't pin down exactly who the abusers had been, she had to be cautious with everyone. This was especially awkward in that her parents lived just a few blocks away in White Bear Lake. (Humenansky denied telling Hamanne to avoid her family.)

As their family relations deteriorated, the patients came to rely increasingly on each other and the doctor, who encouraged mutual support and more. One patient testified that Humenansky asked her to check on another patient who was suicidal, suggesting that "if you get down there and she's not dead, go next door and call the police." And in the state medical board report there's a story of how one day, most of the therapy group went with Humenansky to check on an allegedly suicidal Leane Gruebel. When Humenansky drove one of the patients back home, the woman said, "You have poor boundaries, Dr. Humenansky." "We got home at 12 midnight," the doctor explained. "I haven't the foggiest idea why she said that. I don't think my boundaries are bad."

One final set of allegations didn't come out at the trial--testimony on it was barred, except for Hamanne's and two other patients' statements that Humenansky had asked them to spend the night at her house. (The doctor denied it.) But in two other lawsuits, women identified only as "Jane Doe 2B" and "Jane Doe 2A" charge Humenansky with having sex with them, in one case after "Jane Doe 2B" came to Humenansky's house for counseling when she was suicidal. Humenansky's attorney, Philip Villaume, has said she vehemently denies the allegations.

Ken was the only family, member to sit through the entire trial, a gray-suited figure who often leaned forward and rested his chin on both fists, Sometime around 4 he would usually leave, headed for eight hours of unloading trucks at Consolidated Freight. When he testified, he sprinkled his sentences with "yes, sirs" and "no, sirs" and stuttered occasionally.

Ken was unacquainted with the sorts of things his wife came home talking about--incest, repression, multiple personalities--but he believed them. "Vynnette would come home and say this is crazy, this is not right, this can't be true. I asked Dr. Humenansky--if she's denying all these things, how can it be true? Dr. Humenansky explained that denial is part of the disorder. Each alter goes through a denial phase."

They also went through suicidal phases. Humenansky warned Ken that when Vynnette talked about killing herself, it was best to stay home with her. He'd just started full time at his job, and his five days of sick leave were quickly used up. But he still missed work. He felt anxious and depressed, and got into the habit of calling home several times a night to make sure that his wife was alive. Dr. Humenansky saw him a few times and prescribed some medications. It was important, she said, that Ken acknowledge Vynnette's personalities, make them feel accepted. One Christmas, he came up with the idea of getting them all a present and bought 40 or 50 gifts: teddy bears, crayons, spinning tops, a nightgown. They were pleased.

Vynnette began having problems with her job at the university. She complained to Humenansky that her boss and co-workers were tampering with her work out of spite. They complained, too, about her "inconsistent" behavior. She gained weight--100 pounds in one year--and felt devastated over losing her looks.

There was one thing, Humenansky told Ken, with which he needed to be particularly careful: sex. One of the children might emerge and take it as incest. Did he, one attorney asked Ken during his testimony, try to have sex anyway? "I tried to on one occasion that I specifically remember," he said. "I was.… making love to a 5-year-old," he finally added. "I didn't like it much." After that he couldn't function at all. Psychologists at the trial testified that he remained impotent years later.

Vynnette noticed, and told Humenansky that her husband seemed less affectionate. He probably had girlfriends, came the reply. A man wouldn't go without. (Humenansky denied giving conflicting advice to the Hamannes.) Vynnette started going through her husband's wallet and monitoring his phone calls. When Ken asked the doctor what to do, he said, she suggested no more trying to have sex; there was always masturbation, and "places to go to take care of this kind of problem." She wasn't specific.

It was during one of Vynnette's hospital stays that Ken started to think he might be cracking. He'd gone to bed one night and found his wife's nightgown lying there. "It smelled like her," he testified. "I slept with it on. Because I just needed something to hold on to. I did that a number of times. So I thought maybe I'm one of those TV people--you know, cross-dressers."

Rattled, he started making calls to 900 numbers, listening in to what seemed like relevant conversations, "I was trying to find someone on one of those lines that I could talk to about this.... I sure wasn't going to a doctor. But there were transsexual, transvestite people on those lines. I was trying to hook up with someone whom I could tell, 'Hey, I'm doing this, what does it mean? '"

Humenansky: *You know something. I think you've done enough work. Got a lot of material you got through. You still fed like you want to die?*

Hamanne: *Either that or it's all a big fake.*

Humenansky: You mean, you're going to kill yourself or say it's a fake?

Hamanne: *You say it's a fake, it feels like a fake....*

Humenansky: *I don't think this is a fake.*

Hamanne: *Mmm.*

Humenansky: *Do you want to see if you can stand up right now? OK and then you see if it's a fake..: You can't get up, can you?*

Hamanne: *Why can't I get up?*

Humenansky: *Because I've given you 500 milligrams of sodium amytal.*

Hamanne: *What is that?*

Humenansky: *It's what they used in World War II for truth serum.*

Hamanne: *But I didn't tell any truths.*

Sodium amytal, according to the Physician's Desk Reference, is a hypnotic substance; in high doses, it can put you to sleep. At lower levels it works a little like alcohol, loosening inhibitions and making you talkative. The drug's use in uncovering memories has not been scientifically established, and most medical textbooks warn against using it that way. But for a while it was popular among therapists struggling to break through their patients' memory barriers.

Though Humenansky hadn't started out with this heavy artillery, her therapy had always relied on hypnotic techniques. She did guided imagery with her patients, suggesting that they visualize a "safe place" or lower themselves into deeper strata with a mental elevator. These methods can lower awareness of one's surroundings and lead to a suspension of critical judgment. Some people can actually fall into something resembling a trance during guided imagery; it happened to Vynnette once when she was describing Humenansky's method during a legal deposition.

When Humenansky eventually proposed formal sessions with her office mate, a hypnotist, Hamanne initially resisted, but Humenansky reassured her that hypnosis was just "a deeper form of relaxation.... I could do it." You could do it yourself if you want. What she didn't say, and probably either didn't know or believe, was that hypnosis had been pretty well discredited as a truth-finding tool. Testimony obtained under hypnosis hasn't been allowed in Minnesota courts since 1980, and in 1985 the American Medical Association released a statement saying that "recollections obtained during hypnosis can involve confabulations and pseudo-memories and not only fail to be more accurate, but actually appear to be less reliable than nonhypnotic recall.... [It] leads to an increased vulnerability to subtle cues and implicit suggestions.... Both the expectations of the hypnotist and the prior beliefs of the subject may determine the content of pseudo-memories during hypnosis."

If memories retrieved under hypnosis aren't necessarily accurate, they are often very convincing. "If the patient is highly suggestible," University of California-Berkeley professor Richard Ofshe testified in court, "the mental image that's formed is very vivid and hyper-clear. It seems strong to the patient. Patients claim that what they envision or imagine is like watching a movie. But they lose control over writing and directing the script. "

A few years back Ofshe, one of the more high-profile critics of the recovered-memory scene, had been called to assist in what may be the most bizarre case of that nature yet: An Olympia, Washington, police sergeant named Paul lngram, accused by his two daughters of sexual abuse, had initially denied everything. But he also insisted that his kids didn't lie. When told by his subordinates, and a consulting psychiatrist, that his memory would improve if he only prayed for it, Ingram--who was profoundly religious--got quiet and put his head in his hands. Soon he was describing intricate scenes of sexual abuse, eventually moving far past what his daughters had accused him of. Suspicious, Ofshe gave Ingram some clues about an incident the daughters said never happened; sure enough, Ingram came back proudly bearing another mental picture. He eventually recanted, but was tried and found guilty on the basis of his original confession. He is currently serving the fourth year of a 20-year sentence.

In early 1991 Vynnette finally did integrate. "It was very emotional," Ken recalled. "We'd lived with these personalities for a period of time--they became part of the family. We'd say goodbye to one and I'd cry. And they'd cry... To us these were beings. They were people. We knew that we were saying goodbye to someone we would never see again. But we also knew that it was part of the healing process for her to become whole and the whole nine yards."

Perhaps it was coincidence that Ken fell apart not long after this. One night during the summer of 1991 he didn't come home. It was five days until, as he put it, he "came to" outside a casino in North Dakota. He drove home, where Vynnette found him in the garage and put him on the sofa.

When he woke again, half a dozen of "the biggest policemen I ever saw" were looking down on him. They suggested he check himself into a hospital, and the doctors diagnosed him with bipolar disorder. What he had just come back from was a major manic episode.

This was trouble. Ken had lost a lot of money on his escapade, and he'd gotten fired from his job, though the union eventually won it back for him. Vynnette had quit her own job after an extended disability leave. The couple still didn't have much of a physical relationship; Vynnette's polychondritis flared intermittently, Adeana was having a rough time in school, and bankruptcy loomed.

Besides, Vynnette was missing her people. Adeana remembered how one day, her mother wanted to do some sewing. "The person who sewed was George, and the way she would get George to come out was to put on a hat because he liked to wear hats. And so this time, she couldn't get George to come out and she was upset. The way she explained it to me was that she felt as if she had lost part of herself."

Somehow, Vynnette and Humenansky--the latter in consultation with her support group of, like-minded fellow counselors--determined that she needed to "disintegrate" a little so she could have more personalities to spread her depression around. Humenansky told her patient to visualize a pie--chocolate, she suggested--and have each alter eat a piece. Vynnette ended up seeing a pie made of worms, and threw up on the way home. When the doctor got back to her professional group, the members suggested that perhaps "this lady has been in a cult."

Humenansky decided to put her patient in the hospital, for at least the sixth time in three years. Vynnette entered the locked unit at United Hospital in October 1991. She wasn't the only one of Humenansky's patients who ended up in the hospital that month. It was going on Halloween, and the doctor got really worried.

Humenansky: *It sounds like, you know, that Grandma was sort of a ritual kind of a person, and it sounds like we're getting into the ritualistic kind of stuff here.*

Ken: *She was a psycho.*

Humenansky: *Who was behind your grandma? Is there a minister there? There was a minister there. Who? What was his name?*

Vynnette: *He was...*

Ken: *It's okay, it's okay.*

Humenansky: *Did he smush you? Is that the one that smushed you ?*

Vynnette: *[sobbing]*

Humenansky: *It was a minister then... It's all right. It's all right. He's a bad minister. He's a bad person. So maybe he brainwashed the grandmother and brainwashed the mother and brain-washed Vynnette. Sure. Didn't you know there's a lot of these guys who do this? Priests and little boys? It's okay.*

Ken: *Vynnette, Vynnette, Hon, look at me. hon, look at me.*

Humenansky: *Ministers are not God. They are messengers of God.*

(The phone rings. There's a long interruption as Humenansky tries to get her son on the phone.)

Humenansky: *Hello, how are you guys.... Is she all right? It was the minister then. Maybe, you know they say--they say that in these ritualistic cults that the minister has to, um, deflower the children and, uh, it's sort of his job to do this, okay? If, if Grandma was part of a cult, kind of a ritualistic thing.*

Vynnette: *[unclear]*

Humenansky: *That's what they say in ritualistic cults, okay? Vynnette, they say that. To scare you. They say that to scare you. To think that you're never going to be all right. So then you're supposed to do what they ask you to do. I learned a little bit about it a week ago Friday and I'm going to learn some more.*

Ritual abuse was not a foreign concept to Humenansky; for at least two years, references to it had been coming up in her practice. She had developed a profound mistrust of the Catholic Church, which she saw as a haven for sexual abusers; two of her patients had filed a highly publicized lawsuit against a bishop, but dropped it after one of them lost confidence in her memories. Humenansky had occasionally warned her patients about other health professionals, friends, and fellow patients she believed to be in unspecified cults.

Vynnette was particularly serious about this part of her therapy. She'd agreed to the sodium amytal sessions in part to get to the bottom of her memories--to know exactly what happened, and who did it. But the "truth serum," at least according to the tape transcripts, didn't yield much, and Vynnette got frightened: Something, she thought, might be buried in her so deep even the most hard-core therapy methods couldn't get at it. She testified Humenansky had told her that some cults implanted "a trigger word, that anyone could come and say to me, and I would go back to the cult and hand my daughter over to have the same things done to her that were done to me. And until I uncovered the people who had done that, and prosecuted them, we wouldn't be safe. If I answered the phone and someone said that word I would leave. If I opened the door and someone said that word, I would take my daughter and go with them."

It was during one of Vynnette hospital stays that Ken started to think he might be cracking. He'd gone to bed one night and found his wife's nightgown lying there. "I slept with it on," he testified. "Because I just needed something to hold on to. I thought maybe I'm one of those TV people--you know, cross-dressers."

Over the course of the 1980s, the concept of secret societies that victimized children had gripped therapists, pastors, cops, and social workers all over the country. Spurred in part by best-selling books like *Michelle Remembers,* claims of satanism and unspeakable rituals became a pop-culture obsession. Teenagers were often the prime suspects, especially if they followed obscure bands, wore funny clothes, or played around with their elders' cherished religious symbols. Ritual abuse allegations accompanied the missing-children scare of the 1980s, during which it was often repeated that cult kidnappings accounted for up to 50,000 disappearances annually. Cult stories also figured prominently in a widely publicized series of day-care panics from Los Angeles to rural Minnesota. Investigators in some of the cases prompted kids with cue cards picturing robed characters and altars, and praised them for coming up with stories that featured dungeons and graveyard robberies as well as flying elephants and day-care workers riding broomsticks.

By the end of the decade, "satanic abuse survivors" were among the top stars of national talk shows. Geraldo did three shows within a five-month period, including "Satanic Breeders: Babies for Sacrifice." Sally Jesse Raphael featured "Baby Breeders" and "Devil Babies"; Oprah interviewed three purported satanic cult victims in three years.

Satanic abuse stories had a unique crossover appeal at opposing ends of the cultural spectrum. To Christian fundamentalists their lure was obvious; to some feminists, ritual rape and pornography were the ultimate testament to patriarchy's dark side. The stories ultimately merged with the multiple personality/recovered memory/incest movement in a powerful symbiosis: Cults, handed down through generations, would deliberately assault their victims' psyches and create alters that willingly did their bidding while the rest of the person was absent.

A sideline to this theory merged with reports on Operation Paperclip (an actual project in which the U.S. had imported key Nazi scientists after World War II) and barely declassified CIA experiments with drugs and mind control to create an even more ominous story line: It was the CIA, in consort with the satanists or by itself, that had program-med multiples through a variety of abuses. Psychiatrist Colin Ross, a past president of the International Society for the Study of MPD, proposed exploring these allegations in a book called *CIA Mind Control* He claimed his patients had told him a lot about the CIA's role. As he testified for the defense in the Humenansky trial, he noted that "I have a patient who says he's been pursued by Greyhound Bus Lines for a million years. I don't necessarily believe everything he says."

During her trial Humenansky said she knew little about the CIA theory. But she was convinced of the reality of cult abuse. "According to what my patients have told me, they are involved in pornographic child sexual stuff movies," she said in a deposition October 24, video of which was played in court, "and during their rituals they kill children, breed children in the cult, drink blood, eat organs, and the list goes on." Asked how

The Case Continues

THE DAY AFTER the verdict against Humenansky, Christopher Barden, the attorney who'd led the scientific portion of the plaintiff's case with near-missionary zeal, fielded calls from Washington, D.C., Texas, California, and England. "There's a tremendous interest in these kinds of cases in the therapy world, as well as the legal profession and the public," he told reporters. "This case will be famous and will be in all the law and psychology textbooks."

A clinical and research psychologist by training, Barden had taken on the case with what he openly acknowledged was a broader agenda. Along with a group he helped found, the National Association for Consumer Protection in Mental Health Practices, he has lobbied for laws requiring therapists to follow informed-consent procedures and use "scientifically proven" treatment methods--standards on which he built much of the Hamanne case. In addition to the six other Humenansky patients, Barden says he represents "at least 15 more cases in other states, and I've turned away another 40 or 50 and talked to at least 200 more. Most people [who call] have no claim because the statute of limitations is two years."

But while Barden insists "this was one of the first truly litigated cases of this type in history--his witness list included many of the better-known scientific critics of the recovered-memory movement--Humenansky's lawyers say the opposite is true. They argue the defense was truncated when Judge Bertrand Poritsky ruled that evidence favoring recovered memories was not scientifically valid and could not be presented to the jury.

Humenansky's lawyers were hamstrung in other ways. Months before trial, the doctor had fired the attorneys appointed by her insurance company; only weeks before it's scheduled start she tried to fire the second set of lawyers, headed by a malpractice specialist from Chicago named Debra Davy. According to court records, the two women had had a dinner meeting during which, as Humenansky told it, "Ms. Davy was yelling, swearing the f-word, G.D., and other vulgar words.... She was agitated and her body was twitching all over and she appeared animated ....

She argued with a restaurant personnel male and mentioned that his private parts were probably not large enough.... She told me that she in effect doesn't believe [multiple-personality] disorder fully and that she does not believe in the satanic cult. She told me that she wants to settle and that she doesn't feel the case is winnable."

Humenansky's insurance company refused to remove Davy. But she eventually disappeared anyway, a few weeks into trial; according to court records, she'd been diagnosed with lupus, an autoimmune disease in the same family as Vynnette Hamanne's polychondritis. The second lawyer in her team, David Waxman, finished the trial, and only a few of the experts Davy had once vowed to call ended up appearing. Waxman and Davy several times asked for a mistrial, and they filed for a new trial again last week.

Meanwhile Humenansky's insurance has appointed a third set of lawyers, headed by a Detroit attorney and assisted by local heavy hitters Oppenheimer Wolff & Donnelly, to handle the Hamanne appeal as well as the five upcoming cases. Phil Villaume, Humenansky's personal lawyer, says he's confident that the appeal and future cases will "go very well," though he acknowledges there's what he considers a worrisome trend. "I'm talking with attorneys all over the country who are working with mental health professionals, and they're realizing that there is a growing wave of these kinds of malpractice cases, and that they need to be litigated more aggressively." The next Humenansky case, involving former patient Elizabeth Carlson, is scheduled for trial in October.

--Bauerlein

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the cults hid the bodies, she explained that "This is what I've been told by patients, that they burn them, and that they carry the remainder of the bones away ..... And so all the evidence when you get to a site of these places is that there was a fire there, and there's no evidence left. I mean, these people have been doing this for thousands of years. They know how to get rid of things."

"Do you believe those stories are true?" she was asked.

"Yes."

"Do you believe that cults have infiltrated the police departments of the state of Minnesota, for example?"

"Yes."

"The sheriff's department?"

"Yes."

"The mayors?"

"Yes."

"The doctors?'

"Yes."

"The hospitals?'

"Yes."

"The universities?"

"Yes."

"Any law firms?"

"Yes."

At trial, Humenansky said she wanted to amend that testimony. What she'd meant to say, she insisted, was that there are quite a few [satanists]," and that there could have been some "in each of the professions." She added that she did believe devil cults were active in Minnesota, particularly around Albert Lea, and that most or all of the stories her patients had told her were true.

In the hospital Hamanne, like many of the doctor's patients, was watched constantly. Her clothes, her wedding band, all the things she could conceivably use to hurt herself, were locked away. She spent a lot of time alone in her room drawing pictures, and during the sessions she and the doctor would try to interpret them. They found altars, babies being sacrificed, buffets of human flesh. Once Haman-ne drew the face of a man, not thinking of anything in particular. She testified at trial that Humenansky told her she'd drawn it that way because he must have been a sacrificial victim and his head had been cut off.

After the sessions, hospital records note, Hamanne often spent her time curled up mute in the corner of her room, or sitting in the shower with the curtain drawn. When she did talk, it was about how all this would come to an end soon. Nurses noticed she was hoarding packets of salt from dining trays. Somewhere in her chemistry training she'd learned that salt could be toxic if you took enough at one time.

Hospital records say Hamanne told the nurses she was crumbling. "I'm afraid to go to bed," she confided. "The dreams will start. They're in my head all the

time." And then: "I'm getting worse instead of better.'

New personalities kept emerging Ray, Sue, Ice Lady, Animal Man, who, according to Humenansky's terse notes, "ate everything cult made him eat (bugs, animals)." Hamanne talked about men breaking girls' legs and raping them, about babies eaten at picnics, about the child she had borne for the cult when she was eight years old.

And then, over and over again, she kept saying it was all a lie, that she'd rather be crazy than believe the stories. Once, during a particularly painful flashback--she saw images of a woman on a stone altar, slit open from neck to abdomen, and of a baby being held up--a nurse asked an unusual question: "Do you want to talk about something else?'

"Pt. instant calm[ed] down and ask[ed] for Benadryl," the nursing note said. The nurses found Hamanne always courteous and polite (one doctor described her as "cooperative to a fault"), but they did notice that she was finally starting to get angry. She didn't get enough attention, she complained, from the staff or the doctor. Sometimes she didn't want to talk to Humenansky and would only sit in the comer with her head down, rocking herself. After one session, she told the nurses that "I felt like putting my hands around Dr. H's throat and shaking her head like rocks. I didn't want to kill her, only shake her head. "

Humenansky was puzzled too. Her patient, she noted once, had written "goodbye letter to husband + child... Has tried several times to kill self w/plastic bag. Vynnette won't speak to me. Says 'it doesn't matter'... It's alright.' Really don't feel I know what's going on with this patient..."

Hamanne's attorney, Christopher Barden, made Humenansky read that passage aloud at trial. "Did you get a consult [from another doctor] at this point? he asked. "Did you get a transfer?"

"No."

"Did you ever consider the possibility that your treatment might be making her worse?"

"No."

Hamanne, however, had begun considering some alternatives. She had heard of a specialized clinic near Denver, the National Treatment Center for Dissociative Disorders. Humenansky agreed that it might be a good idea to go. Their first opening was after the New Year.

On January 1, after eight weeks on the locked ward under suicide watch, Humenansky discharged Hamanne from United with a plane ticket to Denver and a supply of the drug Pamelor that, according to trial testimony, could have killed her if taken all at once. Because she was leaving on a Friday, she would have to spend the weekend alone in a hotel before being admitted to the clinic.

The Denver center's records say she wanted two things from her two-week stay there: "Education about MPD and therapy of same" as well as "help to find new therapist in MN." She had, a nurse noted, a very difficult time expressing doubts about [her therapist] whom she believes has self-disclosed as also being MPD." She continued to have cult memories of "eating a roasted baby, being raped by a blond man" and to show a dizzying array of alters, often moving in and out of personalities every few minutes. She was discharged after two weeks with a diagnosis of MPD.

When she came back, Hamanne went straight from the airport back to the hospital, to which Humenansky re-admitted her. All her personalities had "found a place to be and hide," the doctor noted in reviewing the Denver specialists' conclusions. "She is not to do any memory work of occult or any pain until everything is in place. This involves her being safe, her having boundaries, and her having a self-esteem of her own." Two weeks later, she was discharged for good. She only saw Humenansky a few more times.

The closing arguments in the case effectively telegraphed the outcome. "We would appreciate a verdict for Dr. Humenansky and no damages," concluded defense attorney David Waxman. "We understand, however, the likelihood that damages will be award-ed." He suggested a quarter-million dollars. Ed Glennon, the white-haired Lindquist & Vennum attorney who had officially led the case, smiled very slightly. In his own summation he suggested that $4.4 million was a more appropriate figure.

The jury--three women, three men--deliberated throughout the afternoon, a Friday, and all day the following Monday, July 31. At 4:30, just as the bailiff came to tell them it was time to go home, they announced they had their verdict: $2.6 million. It was the largest award ever in a growing body of such cases.

Humenansky's lawyers vowed to pursue "all avenues of appeal open to her." Some of Hamanne's lawyers, who also represent five other women in the process of suing Humenansky, went on vacation. Humenansky's insurance company had already filed a declaratory-judgment action seeking to establish that the doctor, by her actions, had already forfeited her coverage.

Vynnette Hamanne wasn't in court during most of the last four weeks of the trial. For a while she simply sat in a waiting room knitting or needlepointing, but eventually she stopped coming altogether. Her family said she wasn't feeling well. They were, it turned out, hearing many of her therapy stories for the first time in court. After sessions they would go home and discuss them, which disconcerted her. She also did not take well to being in the same room with Humenansky.

A lot of psychologists had examined Hamanne as part of the case, performing tests, conducting interviews, and reviewing her medical history. Their views of the case differed, but they all agreed that whatever disorders she may have had before seeing Humenansky, what she had afterward was a serious psychiatric problem.

The therapist Hamanne turned to after leaving Humenansky's care, Jeff Ford, said she had come a long way since he first saw her. Back then she would switch between a number of personalities in sessions. Whenever she talked about her abuse memories, her arms and legs would shake and tears ran down her face.

Ford learned that he had to tread carefully. Hamanne became "very upset" whenever Humenansky came up, he testified, and at one point, when he encouraged her to draw pictures, she came up with "this gruesome tree dripping with blood. "Within days she was back in the hospital. She reported nightmares of running through the woods and being pursued by robed figures; when they lifted their hoods, Humenansky's face peered out. According to Ford, she had all the symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome when it came to her previous treatment.

The question the experts didn't seem quite sure on was whether Hamanne ever had MPD. She could have invented all those personalities drawing on what she

learned in therapy; even the defense at one point brought up the concept of "shared delusional disorder." But shared delusions are generally thought to disappear within weeks or months after the patient is removed from the source of the delusions. In Hamanne's case, symptoms of MPD persisted for years after she left therapy with Humenansky. Ford testified that as he focused on "containment"--hemming in rather than drawing out new alters and their memories--the personality switches became fewer and farther between. But as late as the spring of 1994 Hamanne was still splitting off new personalities, once after watching *Jurassic Park.* The last time anyone saw one of her alters, it seems, was late last year when she was getting ready for a deposition in the case. It was Elizabeth, her "soothing child," who appeared then.

Some of the experts concluded that Hamanne actually did have something close to the textbook description of MPD. But experts for the plaintiff maintained that no real MPD symptoms appeared until she met Humenansky, and that they were caused by the treatment itself. According to Marian Hall, a retired University of Minnesota psychology professor who did extensive work on child abuse, the therapy caused Hamanne to lose ego strength, boundaries, identity: She no longer trusted her recollections or herself.

"There was an effort--I don't want to say consciously--to destroy the patient's ego capacity and make her into a little child," said Hall. "It became very easy to create 'little people.'... And the tumor grew on itself. Once she'd accepted the diagnosis, Hamanne "wasn't allowed any kind of corrective context, no way to test this out."

"There's been so much done in her memory, so much tramping around," said Jeff Ford at the trial, "that I don't know which memories are true or false." Her mother was similarly confused. At family gatherings now, she told the court, her daughter might begin talking about some event she remembered. But then she would have to stop, a little anxious, and ask whether it really happened.

Mary Ellen Egan and Matt Keenan contributed research to this story.

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