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Qualitative Inquiry 2008; 14; 1302

DOI: 10.1177/1077800408322670

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From My Narrative Inheritance to Their Own Narratives

An Introduction to the Special Section on Harold Lloyd Goodall, Jr.'s *A Need to Know: The Clandestine History of a CIA Family*

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These comments provide a brief introduction to and framework for this special issue honoring and commenting on the author's memoir: *A Need to Know: The Clandestine History of a CIA Family*. By locating his narrative within scholarship dedicated to family secrecy and to cultural histories of the cold war and war on terror, the author connects the long term consequences of growing up in a family marked by secrecy and fear to the long term consequences of a people living under conditions of an enduring war marked by a culture of secrecy and fear.

Keywords: *family; secrecy; culture; fear; war*

Love suffers long, and is kind.

I Corinthians 13:4

I was—and continue to be—deeply honored by the invitation given to me by Norman Denzin to create a panel for the Second International Congress on *Qualitative Inquiry* around my book, *A Need to Know: The Clandestine History of a CIA Family* (Left Coast Press, 2006). The book is perhaps best described here as an autoethnographic cold war history and memoir, which is a large academic description for what I think of simply as a story about my family and high toll that secrecy cost us during the first of America's enduring wars.

I say the first of our enduring wars because we are—as a nation and as a world—currently engaged in another one and because there are clear and

present resonances between my family's secret and the toll it took on our lives and the families of those engaged in the current war and the likely toll it will take on theirs. Which is to say, *yours*. But my book is not simply a story about my family. It is also a story about American culture in a time of enduring warfare.

Gregory Bateson famously observed that communication is pattern recognition. For me, there is a cultural pattern to these enduring wars—a dangerous one—created by a government-sponsored culture of fear, a need for secrecy among our leaders, the demand for loyalty to those who work for those leaders, and the politics of betrayal in intelligence organizations, both the betrayal of those who question leaders and the political betrayal of our nation's highest ideals. For me, these issues are not merely the high-minded stuff of academic debate but the lived experiences of my growing up. The fallout of those storylines still lives in my bloodstream, and its effects still reside in my bones.

A Need to Know is the most personal narrative of all of the personal narratives I have authored in my career. It had to be. I had to be honest with myself about my past. But moreover, I had to find a way to articulate the silent storyline I had actively concealed within myself to protect myself from its known truths, and to protect myself from the shame I felt because I knew, in addition to what I knew and what I did not yet know about our family secrets, that I was no hero in this story. I hated—had hated for decades—my own easy complicity in what one prepublication reviewer called my family's Shakespearean tragedy.¹ To cure the hate, to overcome the shame, I needed to come clean. Furthermore, I had the best and most compelling of all possible motives for doing so: My own son had asked me to tell him the truth about my family. Denial ends where love begins. *A Need to Know* was one result.

Another reason was the panel at the Congress that spawned the articles in this special section of *Qualitative Inquiry*. All but one of these excellent contributors were—and are—high on my personal list of ethnographic heroes: Ron Pelias, Carolyn Ellis, Art Bochner, and Norman Denzin. The final contributor—Stephen Hartnett—is not (yet) an ethnographer but is instead a distinguished poet, philosopher, historian, critic, activist, and one of the finest minds in America on the idea of democracy and its cultural legacy before and since the cold war.

Once we formed the panel, no further instructions were given or shared for what each contributor might do. Thus, I showed up in Urbana on a fine spring day, May 6, 2006, with great anticipation for what might happen. My own task was easy: I needed to introduce the panel members and provide a

brief framework for an audience who, I knew, had come to hear these fine scholars perform but probably had not (yet) read my book.

The articles in this special issue are what the audience members heard, with a few slight after-the-fact edits. I am very pleased to note that each of the pieces is less about my book than they are about what reading and thinking about my book inspired in the contributors. The result was personal narratives presented in various forms: three stories, a letter, one celebratory critique—and each one is drawn from unique experiences with secrets, with families, with histories and wars, with reading and listening, speaking and writing, with the power of language, and, in one way or another, with the intricate and often ineffable intimacy between fathers and sons.

“Love suffers long, and is kind.” I can think of no better epitaph for my family story. Nor for these family stories, inspired by that story. Nor—hopefully—when you have finished reading this special section and had time to consider their truths against your own, for your story as well.

Note

1. Elaine Tyler May provided the quote for a blurb on the book jacket. The whole of it reads:

Goodall has written a powerful, eerie, and moving portrait of his father, and of a life built on lies required of a secret agent during the Cold War. The book reads like a mystery combined with a Shakespearean tragedy—and conveys how families can be battered and broken by the forces of clandestine government work. This tale is an intimate story of family life, and also a chilling picture of Cold War America.

Harold Lloyd Goodall, Jr., is a professor of communication and director of the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University, Tempe. He is also known as Bud or Buddy, has appeared in print in the United Kingdom as Howard, and is searchable on Internet sites under H.L. He has never been called Harold. His published work is filed in the Library of Congress under H. Lloyd Goodall, Jr., which is the version of his name favored by his first editor, Louise Waller, who told him that “nobody would buy a book by someone named Buddy Goodall,” and whose stylized format is drawn from that of F. Scott Fitzgerald, about whom Bud (while still Buddy and before he was H.L.) wrote his doctoral dissertation. Neither was F. Scott Fitzgerald ever called Francis.