

# YOUTH HOUSE

## PSYCHIATRIST'S REPORT

8/7/53  
Bronx

Case No. 86906

Date of Admission 4/16/53

Name O'NEAL, Lee Harvey

Date of Examination May 1st, 1953

Age 18

Psychiatrist Eustace Hartogs, M.D., Ph.D.

This 18 year old, well built, well nourished boy was remanded to Youth House for the first time on charge of truancy from school and of being beyond the control of his mother as far as school attendance is concerned. This is his first contact with the law.

He is tense, withdrawn and evasive boy who dislikes intensely talking about himself and his feelings. He likes to give the impression that he doesn't care about others and rather likes to keep to himself so that he is not bothered and does not have to make the effort of communicating. It was difficult to penetrate the emotional wall behind which this boy hides and he provided us with sufficient clues, permitting us to see intense anxiety, shyness, feelings of awkwardness and insecurity as the main reasons for his withdrawal tendencies and solitary habits. Lee told us: "I don't want a friend and I don't like to talk to people." He describes himself as stubborn and according to his own saying likes to say "no." Strongly resistive and negativistic features were thus noticed but psychotic mental content was denied and no indication of psychotic mental changes was arrived at.

Lee is a youngster with superior mental endowment functioning presently on the bright normal range of mental efficiency. His abstract thinking capacity and his vocabulary are well developed. No retardation in school subjects could be found in spite of his truancy from school. Lee limits his interests to reading magazines and looking at the television all day long. He dislikes to play with others or to face the learning situation in school. On the other hand he claims that he is "very poor" in all school subjects and would need remedial help. The discrepancy between these claims and his actual attainment level show the low degree of selfevaluation and selfesteem at which this boy has arrived presently, mainly due to feelings of general inadequacy and emotional discouragement.

Lee is the product of a broken home as his father died before he was born. Two older brothers are presently in the United States Army while the mother supports herself and Lee as an insurance broker. This occupation makes it impossible for her to provide adequate supervision of Lee and to make him attend school regularly. Lee is intensely dissatisfied with his present way of living, but feels that the only way in which he can avoid feeling too unhappy is to deny to himself competition with other children or expressing his needs and wants. Lee claims that he can get very angry at his mother and occasionally has hit her, particularly when she returns home without having bought food for supper. On such occasions she leaves it to Lee to prepare some food with what he can find in the kitchen. He feels that his mother rejects him and really has never cared very much for him. He expressed the similar feeling with regard to his brothers who live pretty much on their own without showing any brotherly interest in him. Lee has a vivid fantasy life, turning around the topics of omnipotence and power, through which he tries to compensate for his present shortcomings and frustrations. He did not enjoy being together with other children and when we asked him whether he prefers the company of boys to the one of girls he answered "I dislike everybody." His occupational goal is to join the Army. His mother was interviewed by the Youth House social worker and is described by her as a "defensive, rigid, over-protective and intellectually alert" woman who finds it exceedingly difficult to understand Lee's personality and his withdrawing behavior. She does not understand that Lee's withdrawal is a form of

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violent but silent protest against his neglect by her and represents his reaction to a complete absence of any real family life. She seemed to be interested enough in the welfare of this boy to be willing to seek guidance and help as regards her own difficulties and her management of Lee.

Neurological examination remained essentially negative with the exception of slightly impaired hearing in the left ear, resulting from a mastoidectomy in 1946. History of convulsions and accidental injuries to the skull was denied. Family history is negative for mental disease.

SUMMARY FOR PROBATION OFFICER'S REPORT:

This 18 year old well built boy has superior mental resources and functions only slightly below his capacity level in spite of chronic truancy from school which brought him into Youth House. No finding of neurological impairment or psychotic mental changes could be made. Lee has to be diagnosed as "personality pattern disturbance with schisoid features and passive - aggressive tendencies." Lee has to be seen as an emotionally, quite disturbed youngster who suffers the impact of really existing emotional isolation and deprivation, lack of affection, absence of family life and rejection by a selfinvolved and conflicted mother. Although Lee denies that he is in need of any other form of help other than "remedial" one, we gained the definite impression that Lee can be reached through contact with an understanding and very patient psychotherapist and if he could be drawn at the same time into group psychotherapy. We arrive therefore at the recommendation that he should be placed on probation under the condition that he seek help and guidance through contact with a child guidance clinic, where he should be treated preferably by a male psychiatrist who could substitute, to a certain degree at least, for the lack of a father figure. At the same time, his mother should be urged to seek psychotherapeutic guidance through contact with a family agency. If this plan does not work out favorably and Lee refuses to cooperate in this treatment plan on an out-patient basis, removal from the home and placement could be resorted to at a later date, but it is our definite impression that treatment on probation should be tried out before the stricter and therefore possibly more harmful placement approach is applied to the case of this boy. The Big Brother Movement could be undoubtedly of tremendous value in this case and Lee should be urged to join the organized group activities of his community, such as provided by the YAL or YMCA of his neighborhood.

Benatus Hartogs, M.D., Ph.D.,  
Senior Psychiatrist.

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