

6 Black and White

HAL IS A BLACK MAN whom I first met when we were both on the staff of a large workshop in the Midwest. We became rather well acquainted, and I was particularly interested to learn that he had married—and had been divorced from—a black woman by whom he had two sons, and that he was now about to marry a white woman. I also learned that he had spent his childhood in an urban ghetto. Consequently, many months later I wrote and asked him if, while I was on a trip to the Midwest, I could tape an interview with him about his marriages. He readily agreed.

Hal is slight, almost fragile in build. He speaks very softly and courteously. He has completed his doctoral degree in one of the social sciences. He is teaching and has also organized a free clinic for people in need.

In the interview he spoke freely, but I believe he is not a person who reveals his feelings easily and at times one must "read between the lines" to get the full meanings of his experience.

It was my intent to focus this chapter almost entirely on his relatively new marriage to his white wife, but I found that Hal cannot easily be understood without a considerable presentation of his unusual background and first marriage. Much of this material is presented in excerpts, but the content is not changed.

HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MOTHER

Well, I was born and raised in Chicago. My mother worked hard, and we had enough money for me to live pretty well. But being in a segregated community, we had to live among Italians and blacks and some Polacks. But most of us were all black and there were all socioeconomic levels. There were some very, very poor in our community and then there were some people across the street who were wealthy. I never wanted for anything. I have always had everything I wanted—four bicycles at one time, a suit almost every payday from my mother. My mother never bought herself anything. It was always for me—overcompensating.

Now, I guess, the real problems that I begin to recall is that I have always been a very demonstrative person, I guess, very cuddly, and, well, I never had this as a child. I never had anybody to love me and care for me, but my mother always worked for me to make sure I always had enough clothes, enough money. Being an only

child, and not knowing my father, lots of uncles and aunts sort of took the place of a father, due to the family relationship that I had as a child.

I never knew my father. But we never made an issue of it, because I always had the things that I needed, and nobody ever talked about it, and I never had any reason to ask. I never felt like some people say, well, you didn't have a family, you didn't have a father to take you to baseball games and other things. I went with so many other people that it never dawned on me that you had to have a father to enjoy these kinds of things, so it was never a problem to me. I never wanted for a father.

I never remember my mother ever reading to me or reading with me. In fact, I have only kissed my mother twice, I think. We had a relationship like a brother and sister. As I would leave in the morning—I would get up in the morning and iron my shirts, and my mother would be asleep, because she didn't get home from the post office until about two o'clock in the morning. So maybe she would wake me up or bring me something and I would eat it and go back to sleep. Nobody ever cooked for me. I had to cook for myself or she always left two dollars every day to buy myself something to eat. So the only time we would eat together would maybe be on the weekend when she was home after church. And then she went to one church—she was a Baptist and I was a Methodist—so we never did anything together. My mother and I never did anything together. The only time we had any close relationship was after she married my stepfather.

ME: That really astonishes me, that you don't remember kissing your mother more than once or twice. Did she show affection in other ways? How about embracing you or putting her arms around you? Was there any of that?

HAL: I never ever remember being really embraced by my mother. I embrace her now, and put my arms around her. But I knew she always cared, because she always gave me things I needed to have. But also she was very strict. I didn't fear my mother, but I knew if she said something, she meant that, and I knew she would smack me or spank me if I didn't do it.... I remember once my mother wrote me a letter when I was in high school and she told me how proud she was, and how hard she had worked for me, and those kinds of things, and how glad she was that I seemed to be happy and that I was making it in life. This letter was very meaningful to me—I don't know what happened to it—it really hit me. She showed a lot of caring

in that letter. She always thought I was a baby, Carl, for example. That was one problem we had in our marriage, my first marriage, that she would always send me clothes, you know, even when we were married. And she gets very hurt, for example, if I tell her that I'm not going to do something. Or like raising the kids, sometimes I say, "Mother, don't treat the kids like that. I would like to treat them another way." Then she reminds me that she raised me. But I still have to call home every week, even now. If I don't call home, she's upset and she calls and wants to know how we are.

HIS BACKGROUND AND NEIGHBORHOOD

The atmosphere and behavior outside of his home was very different indeed from the indulgent but well-behaved manner inside the home.

I remember I started drinking when I was about seven years old. I was sneaking drinks. And then I remember in elementary school we used to drink all the time. We would go out and buy bottles of wine. We would go to the grocery stores and since I was the smallest they would kick the bottle of wine all the way down to the end of the door and I was so small I could grab it and run around the corner with it. We used to do that and sit out in the backyard and drink the wine. Then I recall we always used to have somebody in the neighborhood buy a half pint of Hill and Hill whiskey before we would go to a party, and we would always be drinking something.

Then I remember the kids in my neighborhood were on drugs at a very early age. In *elementary* school I remember the kids taking pills and smoking marijuana. And most of the kids in my neighborhood were on heroin at an early age. And there was lots of prostitution going on in the community.

There was lots of gang warfare in my community. We used to have to pay protection dues to adolescent gangs just to come out of the house. If you didn't do this, you would be beat up on and you couldn't go to school.... and I was sort of one of the fastest in the neighborhood, and I was a good boxer, so I would always be the collector of the money. This other fellow we called "Honest John" I ran around with. He was the worst person in our neighborhood. So it was my responsibility to—if the fellow would say, "I don't have the money," then he would say, "Hit him, Hal," and I

would hit him and then I would jump back and they would jump on him and take the money from him. I had to do this or I couldn't come out of the house. So in order for me not to be a coward, I had to run along with them. But I never had a fight, one to one, with anyone in my life.

So learning to drink at an early age and having been exposed to narcotics at an early age—I recall my mother remarried, and my stepfather, who was a minister, he told her that I was a wild man. Because when they got married, I wasn't even at the wedding. I was about eleven. They just didn't know where I was. I was gone someplace.

I was never a child. I never knew what it was like to be a child. At the age of seven I was able to clean the house. We had a rooming house with twenty-two rooms in it. We rented the upstairs out. And all the basement was mine. I had ...my mother bought me a bed for down there, weight-lifting equipment, a pinball machine. I had a regular-sized pool table. I just had all those kinds of things at an early age.

He describes how he was active in dramatics, went to concerts, and had a very considerable cultural education "...but when I would leave that kind of thing, I would come back into the community where I lived and would take on a hoodlum role again. You had to have this, because if you were ever seen as not being a part of it, well, then you were ostracized and ostracism meant that you would fight every day!"

SCHOOL

I never learned anything in elementary school. I remember that the teacher would send me to the store to do her shopping for her—to go downtown and buy her stockings for her, things like that. I was always such a good little man, 'cause my mother trained me to buy her stockings and to do the shopping. I ironed my own shirts, I cleaned the house. I did everything like that. I just knew how to maintain myself. So they thought I was being a nice little man when I should have been in school learning with the other kids. So as a result of that I didn't really start learning until I got in college. I had to go back and relearn all the things I should have learned in elementary school.

HIS FIRST MARRIAGE

Hal reflects upon *why* he married his first wife:

I guess the first and most important thing that I can recognize is that I got married out of loneliness, having been raised as an only child and having had not very many close relationships with people, and not having done lots of dating in my life. I went into the service after spending two years in college, where I met my wife.

The thing that I can remember about the relationship was people saying that she would make me a nice girl.

She was a very quiet person, a churchgoing person. Her family didn't drink or smoke, and she was a very Christian person. But our lifestyles were so totally different.

But people said she would make me a nice girlfriend, and then I was most encouraged by a friend of mine—a fellow that I had much respect for—that she would be a good person for me.

After a period of some dating, Hal left for his stint in the Navy, and didn't even write to her. However, a chance circumstance started up their correspondence, and just before he was discharged, they were married. He was twenty-three. They were a very inexperienced couple, sexually and in every way, "inexperienced about just living."

I was still thinking about not being the best student in school, and I felt with a wife like this who could complement me when I had my weaknesses, that she could help me get my papers out on time and those kinds of things. But after a period of time I found out that she was unwilling to give me support, or unable to. An example is that I would write a paper—and I would ask her to type it for me right away, because I didn't like to wait. I always liked to get my stuff in early. Well, maybe some days she would wait until the day it was due to type it, and I would be very upset and angry and nervous.

He feels that the great differences in type of background and of lifestyle, the fact that she was very uncomfortable with his friends, especially those he was meeting professionally,

were additional reasons for growing more remote from each other. But there were other factors.

I think one of the things that really hurt me was my being cuddly and needing love and caring—but it didn't dawn on me then that I didn't have that in early childhood and that there was a need for that. I remember once I reached to kiss her and she moved away from me. I never forgot that. It was very hard for me to show affection anyway. I would always think that people would reject it because of my stature—I was short and I never thought that anybody would really like me in any particular kind of way, other than my money. It was sort of like buying friendship. Then when somebody that you think you are finally able to relate to sort of moves away and rejects you, I think it was just a little too much for me.

I got through school in *spite* of my wife's lack of effort and interest, anyway I did. And I wasn't sure whether there was sort of a jealousy or what, but it seemed to me the more I would go up the ladder, the more resentful she would become. She never really voiced resentment but it was just the way she would do things. For example, I would leave for school in the morning and maybe come back in the afternoon and she would still be in bed. Or I remember the fellows used to tease me about my having to wash my own clothes and having to clean the house on Sunday. And so these were some of the things that were irritating to me.

The sexual life wasn't a good one after a while. I really didn't enjoy it. And I wanted to leave several times. One time I remember that I did move out and then I came back ... I was gone for about a day. And then I thought, "Well, this is no way." And we laid in bed and cried about how sad it was, and we shared that together. I felt better, but I guess deep down I knew that it wasn't going to last.

ME: You mentioned that sexual relationships became less and less satisfying as the marriage worsened. Had they ever been satisfactory to you, and especially had they ever been satisfactory for her?

HAL: I think there were several times. I would ask her if she had a climax and if she enjoyed it and she said she did. But other times—I can also remember sometimes that I caught her masturbating. My sexual patterns were that I was much better in the morning and I liked to have sex in the morning. And she would like to have sex in the

evening. Well, sometimes I was able to. Other times I was just tired, just physically exhausted. Exhausted. I was working sixteen to eighteen hours some days, and when I would come home, I was just too tired. I would have one can of beer and fall asleep. So those were bad times for me and so I would try to help her understand....I don't remember having an awful lot of enjoyable sexual experiences with her. There were times that there were physical releases, but I was always conscious of a woman being satisfied, and I have always worked hard at that, to make sure that she did, and I tried not to be selfish about it.

He understood that she wished he was in business rather than professional activities. So he went all out in a variety of simultaneous business ventures, which left him exhausted, as he has mentioned.

With all her skills and talents I thought that she would certainly want to help me do these things, but it ended up that I did all of them myself. And so this kept me out of the home quite a bit, trying to run the businesses and keep things up, and for us to have enough money to do the kinds of things she wanted to do.

By this time they had two children, so the problem of supporting his family was real.

THE BREAKDOWN—AND BREAKUP

The element which finally brought a separation was quite different from anything thus far mentioned, one in which he did not see the warning signals.

She had a habit of getting up late at night and driving away, you know, down to the lake. It never bothered me at first when she would do this. I felt that she needed to get away. I worried about it—it was late at night sometimes—and I didn't quite understand this.

And then sometimes she would take off and go home [in another city] without my knowing it. I remember once she left me. I took the kids out riding and came back and she was gone and didn't come back for several days. I didn't know where she was. So I called her home and found out she was there, and I had to be very angry

and tell her the kids were sick and she should be at home.

Then later on she had a ... a nervous breakdown, I guess it was. This time it sort of bothered me, because she went to a friend, and this friend called me and said she was on the couch having hallucinations ... saying she was dying and very fearful of this. And she would start writing notes—typing things on the typewriter which I found later which were incoherent. I didn't quite understand it.

I remember sometimes she said she wanted to talk to me but I never knew it was that serious, you know, and sometimes it seemed there wasn't much to talk about. Then I would plan some days to come home and be very kind to her and do things that I thought a wife would like, you know, buy her flowers and bring her things. That was okay for a while, but it seemed to be something in our communication, that we just didn't talk enough, that we always waited until a crisis happened.

Eventually she had to be hospitalized, and much trauma was associated with that. Some time after she was home from the hospital Hal received a good job offer in another city and they moved there. Her sister came to visit.

I left going to work that day, and when I came home that night, she had completely moved. All the furniture, everything was moved out. The only things I had left was a rollaway bed, my clothes, and my clock radio. Everything was completely stripped by the movers. They took everything out. So it was hurting and sorta sad, but there was a great relief I felt. Because, you know, I didn't have to make the decision, she made it. But I felt more pain about the kids than feeling sorry for where she was psychologically.

ME: You commented earlier on what must have been her feelings of fear and so on, but what were your feelings at the time of her breakdown?

HAL: Well, my feelings were ... I was very hurt. I wondered if I was the cause of her breakdown and what role I played in it. I was sort of upset that I hadn't taken time to listen to her, not knowing it was that serious. And I felt bad because working so much with other people, I didn't see the indications at all that she was sick. I knew that she had these migraine headaches all the time. I knew this. And I knew that she was, well, I know sometimes she seemed to be depressed. So these things I reflected

back upon and I felt very bad, not knowing what my role was in her being ill.

But the thing that, I guess, really helped me not feel too bad about my responsibility for her being sick was that the psychiatrist told me that he didn't think it was my fault, and that she was schizophrenic, and she probably would be that way, and it was just a thing that happened, and that it wasn't my fault. And he said that these things were probably there a long time ago. The thing that helped me in relationship with her family, too, was that they made comments to me like they were surprised that the marriage lasted so long. They had often felt that there was something wrong with their sister, that she would often go into her room and stay there for a week by herself and just wouldn't come out. And she always had the headaches, and this type of thing. They said that it always seemed like she lived in a world of fantasy, even as a child. But these things hadn't dawned on me, but it sort of helped me to feel better about it.

ME: Did she ever talk with you as to why she left home?

HAL: No. She never has. We never really talked about it.... It was just sorta that she was glad that she was away and out from under the stresses. I guess I was so glad in a way that she was gone and the pressure was off me, that I never asked.

After the separation, one time I went to do a workshop and I called my kids to see how they were doing, and she asked me to come and get the kids. So I thought that was sorta ... well, it bothered me for a mother to say, "Come and get the kids. I want you to keep them." I didn't think much of that, but I did go and get the kids and they lived with me for a year and a half before I got married again. That meant that I was mother and father. I had to cook breakfast, and iron, and my oldest boy being asthmatic meant that I had to keep his room very clean. He couldn't drink milk and eat chocolate things and it was sort of tiring on me, with me still going to school to try and get my degree.

COMMENT. My comments on Hal's first marriage can be brief, because the roots of its disintegration stand out so very clearly. There was first a lack of real acquaintance before marriage—some dating, a considerable period of no interchange at all during his first period in the Navy, then correspondence, then a marriage before he left the Navy. They had really had no opportunity to get to know each other well.

The reasons he gives for his marriage are his loneliness, the fact that she was a quiet, religious girl, and perhaps most important of all, the advice of his best friend and others. None

of these represents a very solid basis for a partnership.

Then there is the almost complete lack of any real sharing during the marriage. He *suspected* a jealousy on her part of his academic and other achievements, but they never explored it. He *thinks* she was resentful but it was never voiced. He must have had reactions to doing the washing and housework, but they were never stated. It didn't "bother" him when she took strange night trips, but "this time it sort of bothered me" when she was hallucinating and showing obvious signs of disturbance. But he learned only much later that her strange behavior went far back into the fantasy world of her childhood. He sums it all up when he says, "it seemed to be something in our communication, that we just didn't talk enough." The height of this barrier between them is shown by their never having discussed together her leaving of the home, involving her final separation from him.

During the period of the separation and the divorce, Hal was working on his doctoral degree and engaging more and more in encounter groups and other intensive group experiences. I see a real difference in his relationship with his first and second wives, probably due in large part to this kind of experience and training.

THE PERIOD BETWEEN MARRIAGES

During the year and a half between marriages, Hal was actively seeking a new partner:

...I decided ... after the separation and divorce ... that I am just not a person to be single. I don't find any fun in being a bachelor. I have often known that I like family life, and I just like being married. And so I was just dating several girls and then it dawned on me that I should be starting a weeding-out process ... (*laughingly*) and begin to see just who I would want to be serious with.

He ran into various problems. "Some of the problems I found, Carl, in dating, were that some of the black girls I dated felt very insecure." He felt that they were uncomfortable because most of his friends were professional people, and the girls felt inferior, though actually they were not.

They really should have no reason for feeling insecure around my friends. And this happened not only with the girls that I knew that were professional or semiprofessional, but just all of the girls that I went with and dated. They just didn't feel comfortable. Some of them would say that I was just too ambitious, or most of them wanted me to spend more time with them. Like devote all of my time to them—be accountable for my time—and they gave me no breathing ground.... And then many of them I found to be so very *insecure* that I would have to leave work and

have to do counseling with them, so there was never any basis of developing love or understanding. Some of them hadn't been able to identify with their fathers because of a divorce situation; or some of them were trying to raise their brothers and sisters or ... there were just lots of things that happened that didn't allow for a good, warm, caring relationship. Then one of the girls I went with whom I really would have married, if she had wanted to at the time, wasn't able to be with my kids in the right way. For example, she would want to discipline them, before showing love to them. And I think you can't discipline kids until they know that you also love them. So we had some conflicts like that.

I guess the things that led to me marrying Becky was ... I met her in Kentucky when I went to do a workshop on school integration problems and ... Becky happened to be in my workshop. And at that time she was married and going through some divorce processes. I never really noticed her except that she was one of the prettiest girls in the group. But I didn't really pay much attention to that. I was really concentrating on leading the group. And then we went to a party, and she asked if I had a ride, and I said, "Well, I don't know. I don't think so." So she said she would give me a ride, but she was hesitant, because she thought that two of the black women maybe wanted to give me a ride, and they may have felt embarrassed or not feel too good toward her if she offered to give me a ride—one of the cultural and racial things was coming into it. So then I accepted a ride from her and we went to the party and we danced and talked and had a good time. So we just sort of met like that. Then we talked coming back, and she told me about some of the problems in being separated, and this type of thing and the possibility of her getting a divorce. And then we became very close to each other and we embraced and then.... I was leaving the next day, and I didn't know she was having these warm feelings about me this way, though we felt very sexy and attracted to each other loving toward each other. So, I went back home, and later she called and said, "This is Becky, and have you forgotten me?" I said, hadn't, and then she began to talk and asked me if I would be free if she would come out and visit me that summer.

So Becky did come out and spent a weekend. She revealed more of her current marital problems but Hal felt "I didn't want to be a part of a divorce thing, so then she assured me that this had already taken place and they were already in the process before, and her husband

wasn't living at home half the time and I things like that. So then we began to correspond quite often.

During the weekend Becky told of a good friend of hers had been divorced and who decided to try a new life. But by the time she felt ready for marriage, the man she wanted was no longer available. "Becky said that this woman told her that if there was anything she wanted, it was best to go after it."

MARRIAGE TO BECKY

After they had corresponded for some time, Hal began to weigh his feelings toward her.

There were just so many things after a while that I came to like about her. She had the kind of things that I wanted in a woman. She was very warm, she was very motherly with the kids, and they liked her. And I liked her son and I saw how she treated him. She really complemented me. For example, her being raised on a farm was more down to earth. She faced things more realistically and worked hard. She loved to cook. She loved to take care of the house. You know, all the kinds of things that I like to have done for me and with me. And she showed lots of compassion and understanding and she didn't want me to give up anything for her. She liked the life I like and she was very aggressive, you know. And she said, "All right, now you get through your doctorate program, and then I'm going to do my master's, and eventually I'll go back and get a doctorate." She just really was feeding the intellectual environment I needed, plus the warm caring as a person.

I just felt that we sort of complemented each other. Also she sews a lot. And if I come home and something like the toilet is broken, she has fixed it. She doesn't have to wait till I get home—it's already fixed. And the thing that she explained to me is that her other husband wouldn't do those things and so she had to learn to do that, and she hoped I wouldn't feel bad if she did the things she thought a man should do. And I explained that I didn't have any ... any problems with that, and that people do the things that they can do best.

So they were married in the presence of black and white friends. Though the marriage is less than a year old, Hal says, "We have just been very happy and we haven't run across any serious cultural differences."

The thing that makes me very happy is the way she relates not only to our kids but the kids that she teaches. She spends lots of time with them. She goes home and makes sure that the mother knows why they were on detention or why they are not coming to class, and those kinds of things, which really is something that that community hasn't had. Then our two boys really like her now. They call her mother now, you know. She and the kids have worked through that, they really have gotten to know each other better. And I think one thing that helped us was this summer when we took a four weeks' vacation. Living that close together in our camper, together with the kids, we really got to know each other well. We went fishing with the kids, and we went hiking, and picking berries and things that I had never done before either. So it was a new experience for me. Like digging bait to go fishing, just a warm kind of thing. So now I am beginning to do the kind of things that I had never done before. Buying the camper was an attempt for me to get out and see more of the world. The thing that I like about it in comparison to my other friends and their wives is that they say we always seem to have a better relationship. We talk through things. When she gets upset sometimes she'll sit and I'll sort of help her bring it out. The only problem we have had for a while is her kid not being with us. We have to go to court now with the case to get her kid. Her ex-husband doesn't necessarily want the boy but he doesn't want us to have him, because of the interracial marriage. And that has been one of the roughest things for her to go through.

And sexually she's much freer than some of the girls that live in the city. She hasn't got the sexual hangups, for example. She has seen cows, and she has seen calves being born and horses being born. And her whole attitude is more healthy than most people. And so that helps us to relate better because she is freer. And she is not wrapped up with the city accomplishment type of thing. Like, for example, clothes. She would rather make her own clothes than spend the money for buying things like that. So as we come together, we share my background and how I respond to things differently, and she shares how she responds to things differently. And so I think that is helping. But here's the thing. We do *talk* about it.

Another thing I might add, too, is that she is not trying to make me white and I am not trying to make her black. We're not imposing our values on each other. We just recognize and know that and just keep on going. If there is some conflict, we deal

with the conflict then, without trying to say, "You have to do it my way" or "This is the way I think it should be done." There's lots of give and take.

ME: There is one thing I wondered about when you were talking about it. In a sense you are both quite career-oriented, aren't you?

HAL: Yeah.

ME: Frequently when a husband and a wife are both career-oriented, then the question of who is moving up the fastest or who is getting the biggest salary can cause difficulty. Do you have any comment on that?

HAL: We have talked about that. Like, we want to have some children, and so we are going to have one or two children, and then after the children Becky wants to go back to work if she can. But she is not so career-oriented that she *has* to do that. She is just saying that she would *like* to do that, time being available for us. And I'm saying, good. Because if that's what you want to do, I would be very happy with your doing that. We don't want to smother each other. We don't want to stifle each other's growth. Because so often that is what really happens in a marriage relationship. Plus our marriage gives *me* freedom and *her* freedom to each develop our own life, you know ... develop our own interests and grow. And so we have discussed that, I think, to where we are very comfortable about her going on and continuing her work in school.

THE DIFFICULTIES IN AN INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE

Up to this point, Hal had mentioned few troubles resulting from this being an interracial couple. So I raised the question.

ME: From your own point of view, it sounds as though the interracial aspect hasn't made any particular difference at all. But what about your life among others in the community? Do you get lots of flak or very little or what?

HAL: "Well, sometimes I get a little flak. At our clinic ... we have some volunteer workers. And first of all some of them couldn't cope with an interracial couple working in it. And part of it was because of things like ... well, some of the black women still think that a black man should be with them, you know. And I shouldn't be a part of

Becky. And then they didn't trust that she was really as actively concerned with the community as we said we were. And some of it is plain jealousy and envy. We have gotten there. We have started our community clinic. We haven't asked anybody's support. All the money has come out of our own pockets. People are used to seeing people come in and asking everybody else to help and soliciting for money. But we haven't done that. We said that when we decided we were going to do it, we were just going to start it, and not be relying upon anybody else.

Then some of the people I meet really admire us, the way we are. They have seen that for the short period of time that we have been married, we have done lots of things. Like we invested in property and we save money and we just do lots of things together. We work out in the yard. You'll see Becky cutting grass, painting the house, you know. It's sort of like the other women are now trying to come out and trying to do more, because their husbands say, "Well, why don't you do things like Becky does?"

Sometimes people will do the staring type of thing. Some of the people at the university are shocked when we come there, who didn't know that she happened to be white, you know. But we really haven't experienced any difficult things. We thought at one time that the kids might experience it, but ... so far they haven't come back with anything. For a while, Jerry, my youngest, didn't know how to tell people that Becky was their stepmother. He hurt Becky one time. She overheard him say to one girl, who asked, "is that your mother?" he said, "No, that's our babysitter." And that sort of hurt Becky. But now with them it's just all "Mommy." Because they have needed the love and attention and caring and they really get it from her. You know, she spansks them, she disciplines them, and they accept it. It's not the same way as I would do it. Like yesterday she had to spank Martin, and I didn't spank him, so she did it, and when it was all through he was just back hugging his mommy.

I remember the other day I went into her class to tell Becky that I was going someplace else before I came home and then one of the kids in class, one of the black kids, said, "Mrs.—, is that your husband?" And they were talking—you know how kids will talk—and most of them were shocked to find that I was black and that she had married a *black* person. So lots of dynamics go on in the community...

Some people are watching to see how we will react ... what we are going to do

and how we do things ... but I don't think she has felt too much about it. She says some of the black women look at us and that she can feel sort of jealous. She gets sort of jealous if they get too close to me sometimes, because she thinks they look prettier than she looks. And so we have had to work on those kinds of things. Sometimes I feel overprotective of her because she doesn't know the community and sometimes this community can play lots of games. And if you don't know the games, you can get trapped in them. Uh, they say some things that they don't mean all the time, but they bait you in and check you out to see if you are really real. So I am trying to get her to know about the subculture and know what it's really like.

ME: You haven't mentioned whether there have been any of these problems when you are mingling with white groups. What about the situation there?

HAL: Well, I watch white men, particularly how they test you. We were at a party and one fellow came over and when he first came in he walked up and grabbed Becky's hand and kissed her on the hand and was carrying on ... we hadn't met him before. But we were sort of special guests at the party. Eventually he finally got around to asking her why she loved me. You know, what was it in me that she liked. So you see these kinds of things, and you can feel the tension that goes on, because they still ... smile as if they like you, and ... but they still have all these concerns in their head ... about the differences ... and they really want to know. I don't think it is necessarily bigotry or racism. Some of it is just being curious. But some people still feel very uncomfortable. For example, we are members of the church and we go out to certain occasions now because the kids are all active in church, and we are active in church, and I can just see the tension. We go to some of the cookouts and the wives don't know what to say. They, they ... start talking. Usually most of the men would come up to me and talk to me and talk to Becky and then the minister would come over and talk, but rarely do the women come over. I have noticed that. I haven't really talked much to Becky about it but I really notice this. So we keep right on going, and because Becky is so outgoing, she is busy meeting friends and mingling and she is not aware of how people are standing there and staring. I usually stand back and watch it. And sometimes I really shock them and ask them what they think about our relationship, you know. And then they say, "What do you mean?" And I say, "What do you think about this interracial marriage we have?" And then ... then they fumble

around very clumsily and don't know what to say, and I say, "You must have felt something about it, you know." Then one time I went to a party and a fellow just stared at us and I said, "Gee, I wish you wouldn't stare. Is there something you would like to say to us, or make us feel comfortable, or what? There must be something on your mind." Then he got offended when I asked him that. And then he didn't want to talk about it, you know. So I do sense those things. I am very careful about where I go to parties. I go out to have a good time and not to go to be the show or to be the press agent.

ME: You may notice that people are shocked or staring or jealous ... but does that affect your relationship with Becky very much?

HAL: No, it doesn't. Uh ... there are times ... I guess I am suspicious of whites. Basically I am that suspicious. And I want them to accept us the way we are, but I have also found out after a long time that I don't worry ... I don't waste time worrying about it the way I used to, about being accepted. So we keep on going and the stares and the comments that people make-well, I just keep on going. At a football game or a basketball game, somebody, I remember, said something about us and made some remarks about us. Then the people, when Becky is out with the kids, I notice how people look at her when they call her "Mommy," and those types of things. But that really hasn't affected us because we are so wrapped up in each other and we feel secure in ourselves, I guess. But for people who aren't secure, and who don't have as much to work with as we have to work with, it would be a tremendous problem. You know, interracial marriage per se is a very rough and difficult thing. Well, just *marriage* is a very rough and difficult thing. And then compounded with the interracial thing, people may say there is no problem but there are problems that develop, you know.

THE RELATIVES

Another thing I have noticed is how my relatives have come around. Now they just really love Becky. Like my uncle calls her his niece and he says, "Well, come on to my niece's house. She cooks the best food in the world." They just feel warm and she is just a member of the family. And I think she feels sort of bad because her

relatives didn't accept me the same way, and I know that has been a problem.

But her mother is now coming around, who opposed the marriage at first, who didn't understand it, and didn't want to have anything to do with it, and now her mother is saying . . . now she knows it's going to work, and so it's okay and she's happy with it, but it just took time to believe this was the right thing. So now she might come out this summer to visit us, so she is understanding that our marriage is based on sound things and we are really doing okay. Becky is teaching and I have the clinic and teaching too. And really it's a good thing.

THE RELATIONSHIP IN THE FAMILY

I was thinking that when Becky first moved in with us, my ... my oldest son ... needed so much love and there was a conflict between him and me for the need of love, and I would become angry sometimes because I thought he was taking up too much of her time when I needed that much time. And then we were able to work that out, or I was able to work it out. I really began to see that he really needed love. He never had a mother to love and care for him. I hadn't either. So then it was sorta like I needed a mother, too, that type of thing. And she was able to love me, and cuddle me, and care for me the way I needed and the same thing I found in my kids, and particularly the oldest boy. He needed it as much as I did. But the youngest boy just sort of sat back, but he also needed it. Then it dawned on me that what was happening in the relationship was that all of us were so starved for love and caring that we sort of had to take our time, and share it in a different kind of way. And so now the oldest kid is just not craving for it as much. He is getting it more and more and he is getting it in different kinds of ways, like getting it from me and from Becky and that's maybe a better way. And I think that since we have been married he hasn't had any asthma attacks at all. He wheezes and we put the vaporizer on and then he is okay. But before he was always-oh, maybe once a week I would have to take him to the hospital, up to the clinic. And so I think he is getting his need met, and I think we have all benefited greatly by the marriage in that way.

COMMENT. Many things stand out for me in this second marriage, and the events which preceded it.

I note first of all Hal's selectivity in his perceptive evaluations of his dates and of Becky. Here is a much more mature person than the younger Hal, who married a woman because his best friend thought she would be good for him. He was in the difficult situation of any man with two children and he tried to choose both a good wife and a good mother, and he was sensitively discriminating in the process.

Becky surely deserves comment. One of the fortunate aspects of the increasing liberation of women is that Becky found the man she wanted and could go after him. The fact that he was black seems to have made no difference to her. But it takes only a little imagination to guess the courage it took on her part, facing the opposition of society, of her family and his, to pursue a potential husband of a different color.

Some men would have resented being pursued. But Hal did not, and Becky knew not only what she wanted, but also what Hal needed. He was fortunate in finding a woman who wished to be his mother, which he desperately needed, and wanted also to be his wife, a companion not only in his activities but in his dreams. She is a giving person, not a demanding one, and this is priceless for each member of the family.

But Hal has learned enormously since the time of his first marriage. Most important, he has learned to communicate. In this respect the change seems incredible. He and Becky talk things out, including such touchy subjects as her quick jealousy of black women who appear to be getting too close to her husband. They have worked out, at least for the present, their possible educational and professional competitiveness. They took a month-long camper trip, in which all four came really to know each other and close communication was a part of each day's living.

As I listen to the interview and read its transcript, it is, in fact, difficult for me to believe that the Hal of the first marriage is the same person as the Hal of the second marriage. Certainly part of this change must be credited to Becky, who is much more outgoing and communicative than the first wife. But Hal's experience with various kinds of intensive group experiences demonstrates conclusively that a person can change, can learn to communicate his feelings and can listen—really listen perceptively—to the feelings of his spouse.

An aspect of marriage which we have not encountered before in this book is the change in Hal's method of working for success in marriage. In his first union he hoped that a successful relationship would come through his *doing* things—the housework, the washing, his business ventures, his achievements in school. If he worked hard enough on doing all these things, surely his marriage would improve, and he worked himself to exhaustion in this attempt.

In his present marriage he is devoting himself first of all to improving the process of their relationship by sharing—his feelings, the relevant information about his community, his ambitions—and it easily becomes a two-way sharing. Doing things is secondary, grows out of the relationship, and is composed of *joint* efforts. They improve their home, they save money, they encourage each other toward professional achievements, they establish their free clinic and work together in it. Actually, as I know from other sources, what they are accomplishing is outstanding in meeting all kinds of psychological needs in the community through their clinic.

Somehow for me two of the most impressive signs of the healthy process of their family relationship are these: Hal's open recognition of his jealousy of his sons as all three of

them compete for Becky's love, and his insightful, maturing, cooperative handling of this problem; most striking of all is the end of serious asthma in the oldest boy, which can only indicate that he has found a family climate in which he can relax in a caring relationship.

I am impressed that this is first of all a partnership between two *persons* and only secondarily an interracial marriage. Yet this latter is not to be minimized. They are surrounded by stares, by shocked looks, by the silence and avoidance of white women which spells hostility, by the jealousy of black women, by vulgar remarks at sports events. Hal's deep suspicion of whites is natural and is clearly present. Without any doubt Hal and Becky are "freaks" to the people with whom they mingle, both black and white, educated and uneducated, in professional situations and at church suppers, to his black family and her white relatives. Yet they go forward, which is possible only because their relationship is presently a source of great security to each.

Hal sums it up well that any marriage is a rough and difficult thing, and interracial marriage simply includes a fresh crop of difficulties and problems. I certainly would not venture a prediction, but I admire the way in which thus far they are facing the problems not only between themselves, but between them and their various subcultures. Particularly I admire the fact that he is not trying to make Becky black, nor is she trying to make him white. If they can continue this understanding and acceptance of their very real differences, as well as of their unusually complementary strengths, then the prognosis is indeed favorable.