SAN DIEGO Reader

Evelyn Walker – abused by prominent La Jolla psychiatrist Zane Parzen

The final analysis

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Evelyn Walker: "I belong to him. Zane is my arms and my legs. There isn't any Evelyn."

She was given the names of three psychiatrists. It didn't really matter which name she selected, so she chose Zane Parzen simply because she liked the sound of his.

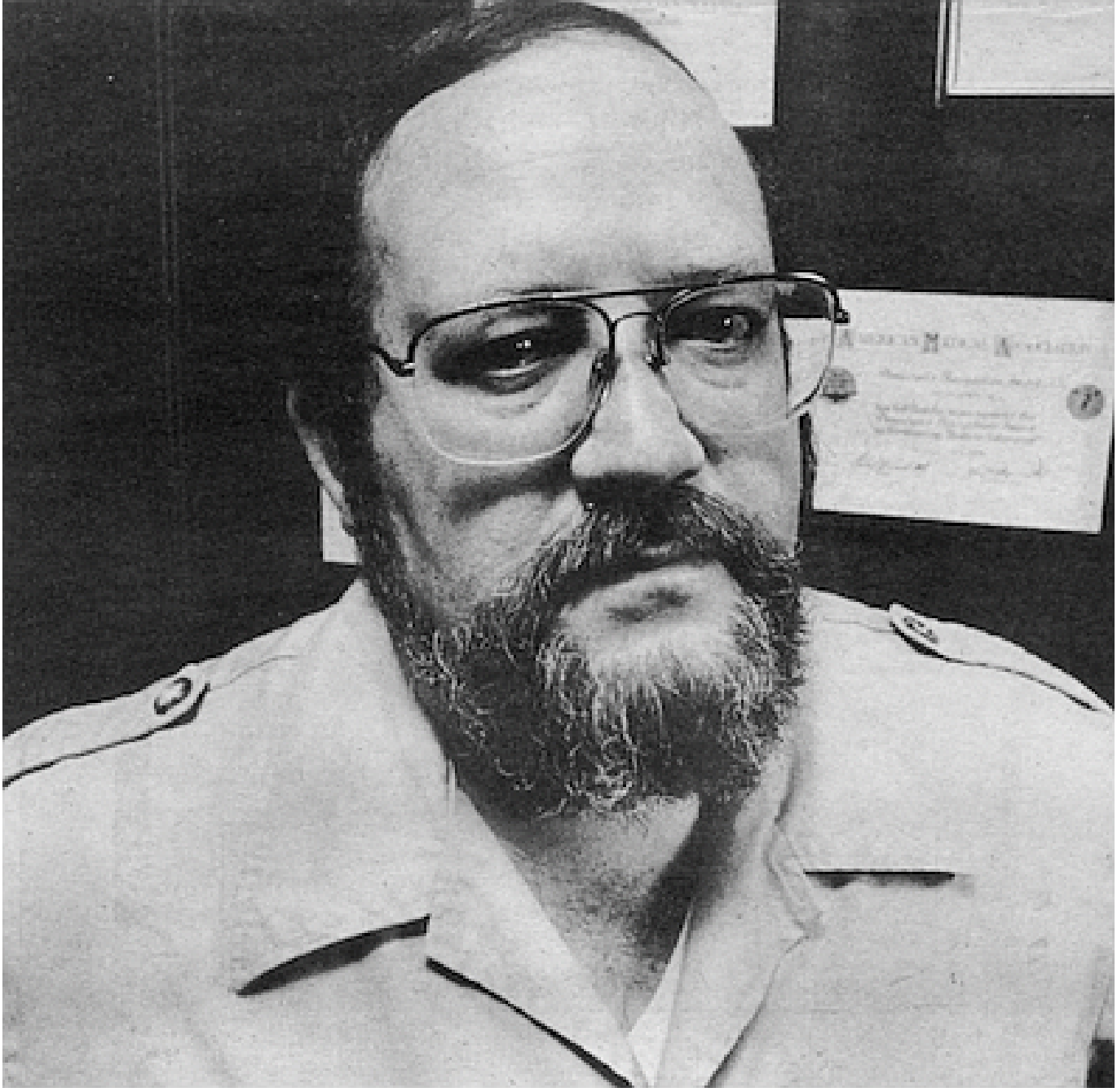
It wasn't a life-and-death decision; she needed a psychiatrist because she was depressed. But ultimately she made his name famous, first in San Diego when she sued him for malpractice (he had lured her into a destructive sexual relationship), then nationally, when a jury ordered him to pay her $4.6 million, the most money ever ordered in a psychological-injury case. The trial was a

year and a half ago, and many people have forgotten already. But not Evelyn Walker; she thinks about Zane Parzen daily. Some nights she dreams about him: she dreamed recently that he was standing in front of her, beckoning with his hands outstretched, cupped upward. His hands were full of pills. He was offering them to her, insisting that she take them from him. She couldn't resist.

Zane Parzen, about 1971. Stroking Evelyn's leg, he repeated over and over that her thinking wasn't crazy.

"I belong to Zane," she said on the rainy afternoon two days after that nightmare. "I belong to him. Zane is my arms and my legs. There isn't any Evelyn." A moment of silence. "She's coming through, but there's a part of her that's dead."

The part of Evelyn Walker that's alive is determined to insure that Parzen's name will never die, and this baffled me when Walker first agreed to an interview. I had asked, half expecting to be refused, now that she's a millionaire, and with the case comfortably behind her, with the intimate details of her life fading or faded from the public mind. Only later did she tell me that today she feels like Ishmael, Melville's narrator. She thinks the only reason she survived what by all means should have killed her, the only reason she exists today, is because she has a story to tell.



Gary Shepherd. Shepherd suggested to the Walkers three names, including that of Parzen, from whom Shepherd had taken an advanced psychiatry class at the San Diego Psychoanalytic Institute.

So I showed up at her condominium complex, which is a place where shake roofs top all the units and all the trees are young and each garage is decorated with its own individual pattern — diamonds or triangles or overlapping squares, painted in shades of chocolate and khaki-brown and tan. The complex is just off Nobel Drive around the corner from the University Towne Centre. When Walker appeared in her doorway, I was impressed by her size. She's very tall, five feet, nine inches, and she's also gained some weight since her trial; not enough to be considered heavy, just substantial, even voluptuous. She looks so healthy, I was thinking; then, almost as if she were reading my mind, she blurted out, "You're probably thinking, 'Gee, she seems perfectly normal.' Just because I'm not like this": she contorted her face and clawed her hands, mimicking the stereotype of derangement.

Often she looks so strong and confident that acquaintances can't believe there's anything wrong with her; strangers don't believe anything ever was wrong. And this is one of the things that has made her life so barren since the trial, she says. One woman walked by her at the 1981 Del Mar Fair and hissed, "Four point six million to get laid." No one should be as smug and complacent as that woman. Walker says. What happened to her could happen again to someone else.

Evelyn recalls that "I was hysterical. My whole life was going."

What was she like before Zane Parzen? She answers compliantly, picking up the narrative at her childhood, which, she recalls, was cheerless. Her parents were Austrian Jews, concentration camp survivors who moved to San Diego from Chicago when Evelyn was sixteen. Her father's work as an electrical engineer brought them here for an aerospace job. She says her mother constantly accused her of being ugly and stupid, would make it clear her daughter provoked her frequent anger, but wouldn't explain how.

"You know what you've done wrong," she would tell the little girl. Evelyn escaped into fantasy; for example, she believed in Santa Claus until she was ten. Art also provided an outlet. At Point Loma High School she excelled in art classes, and when she graduated she'd hoped to continue her education in fine arts, though she says there was no money for tuition. So she took a job doing office work and light engineering drafting at Convair-Astronautics (the General Dynamics precursor). By then her dismal childhood appeared to be irrelevant — her co-workers knew her as a witty, outgoing, well-adjusted young woman.

Evelyn received the check for one and a quarter million dollars (Lewis got the other half of the award) more than a year ago. Yet in many ways she acts as if the money isn't real.

She met Bruce Walker, who also worked at Astronautics, when a girlfriend arranged a double date. Evelyn had just turned twenty and Bruce was four or five years older. He was an electrical engineer with a master's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a huge man, six feet, four inches tall, with the bluest eyes Evelyn had ever seen. After a few months of courtship, they decided to get married. When the wedding day approached, "I thought I was the luckiest person in the world to be married to him. I adored him," she says. "But he was never my friend. I was always afraid of him."

Today Evelyn feels bitter about Bruce, but all of that springs from hindsight. When she looks back on their sixteen-year marriage, she now sees that Bruce never confided to her his feelings; he would even sign Mother's Day cards he gave to her, "Sincerely, Bruce Walker." Whenever Evelyn became upset over something, he would ignore her or even leave the room, declaring that he'd be

happy to discuss things with her when she was calm. She says he never displayed affection, rarely touched her at all, in fact. But she was accustomed to worse; her parents' home had been a cold and joyless place. "I really was the perfect wife for Bruce. I thought he was great, and so did he," she says without sarcasm. "When he said jump, I said, 'How high? And kick me while you're at it.' "

After the wedding in July of 1960, they settled into an apartment on Worden Street in Point Loma, arid they soon had a son. Another boy was born three years later, and Evelyn reveled in her role as a mother. Her artistry blossomed as well. Mostly she worked with woven fibers, selling many wall hangings and elaborately decorated baskets and other pieces to design studios around town. But despite winning local acclaim as a weaver, she principally saw herself as a housewife. When the family followed Bruce to a better job in Riverside for two years, she lapsed into a mild depression and consulted a psychiatrist for a while. "But I honestly never gave a thought to the possibility that anything at all was wrong with my marriage." When the Walkers moved back to San Diego (another job change for Bruce), life again seemed bountiful. "I got excited being with Bruce. We would travel together, do things. We went to Europe and Asia and Mexico. And I got excited when he was home .... I believed he loved me and I believed I would be his wife until I was a little old lady and he was a little old man."

In 1972 they took another step toward that future by having a four-bedroom home built on Barkla Street in University City. In January of 1973 they moved in, and found they had pleasant next-door neighbors in the form of Gary and Betty Shepherd, a psychiatrist and his wife who had just moved into their own house. The two couples became friendly— especially Evelyn and Betty— and Shepherd recalls that in those days Evelyn was a very artistic woman, talkative and friendly, but "pretty much dominated by her husband." Both couples joined a local gourmet group, and seen in this and other purely social contexts, Evelyn did strike Shepherd as being a "borderline" personality. In technical psychological terms, "borderlines" are people who share certain characteristics: they tend to react more catastrophically to separations from their loved ones, they handle stress and criticism more poorly than average, become anxious more easily. They're more likely to abuse tranquilizers or alcohol, and they have a weaker than average sense of self-esteem — they tend to rely more heavily on externals to bolster their identity. Although Gary detected some of these traits in his neighbor, he says nothing indicated that Evelyn Walker was anywhere close to crossing over that border into psychosis. Most people with "borderline" features never do cross it. Shepherd says.

About a year later, however, in 1974, both Evelyn and Bruce asked Shepherd to recommend a psychiatrist for Evelyn, who once again had fallen victim to depression. "You know how it is," Evelyn says today. "Your mother-in-law tells you you have a beautiful home and two healthy children and a wonderful life, and you're married to her son. So how could you have anything to

be depressed about?" Nonetheless, Evelyn was increasingly subject to feelings of incompetence. Her sons were approaching adolescence; in subtle ways, they were acting more and more like Bruce, and sometimes they intimidated her. Perhaps, too, the pressure of maintaining her husband on his pedestal was beginning to wear, Evelyn speculates today. In any case, she couldn't dispel her dour mood.

Shepherd suggested to the Walkers three names, including that of Parzen, from whom Shepherd had taken an advanced psychiatry class at the San Diego Psychoanalytic Institute. Not only did Parzen possess a glowing reputation, but he had been trained at a psychiatric institute in Chicago noted for its work with people with "borderline features." Shepherd didn't tell the Walkers all this; he didn't single out Parzen.

Bruce, who had encouraged his wife to seek professional assistance, took Evelyn to her first appointment at Parzen's office on Herschel Street in La Jolla in September of 1974. In fact, Bruce did all the talking that session, according to Evelyn. She recalls that she sat quietly, observing the room and the man. She saw a very tall, lean, good-looking fellow about forty years old. "You know who Alan Alda is, don't you? That's Zane," she says today. Distinguishing Parzen from Alda were the psychiatrist's mesmerizing dark chocolate eyes — eyes that dug into the objects of his gaze. He also smoked a pipe constantly. Evelyn liked that. Her uncle Eric, the only bright light of her childhood, was also a smoker, and to this day Evelyn dislikes men who shun tobacco. Parzen seemed to be nicely solicitous toward Evelyn, but her attitude toward him and his professional services was passive, disinterested. "I felt that going [to the psychiatrist] was of no real importance," she says. When Parzen ordered her to begin taking tranquilizers and said he wanted her to return the following week — alone — she complied docilely. "I followed his orders because I was used to following all orders," she says.

Evelyn thinks Parzen targeted her for his twisted attentions at that first session. Later he was to confess publicly to a weakness for tall, thin, nervous women, and today Evelyn wonders if he didn't start chipping away at some level of her psyche that very first time they were alone.

He immediately began prodding her to find fault with Bruce, a line of questioning that first surprised and later irritated Evelyn. Even more aggravating were Parzen's attempts to elicit her opinion of him personally. "I thought he was just on a big ego trip," she says. Certainly she didn't view her doctor romantically, she insists. A minor exchange between them early in 1975 supports that memory. Parzen then was waiting to move into an office at 1200 Prospect Street in La Jolla, but shortly before his new quarters were ready, he had had to vacate the office on Herschel. In the two-week interim, he was seeing his patients in a suite of rooms at the Royal Inn of La Jolla on Fay Avenue. Evelyn walked in for her first appointment there, took a seat on the living room couch, and started chatting with Parzen. It occurred to her that there was no bed in the hotel room, and

she asked why. Parzen replied that he had ordered it removed because some patients might find it “suggestive.” At that Evelyn burst out laughing. “I said, ‘You mean someone would think of you sexually?’ To me, he was almost a nonsexual being.” Besides, “I really loved Bruce, and I'm a really faithful wife.”

She continued to feel that way when she walked into Parzen’s penthouse quarters at the new building one day after she’d been seeing him for about six months. But something was bothering her. The night before, one of her eldest son’s teachers at La Jolla Country Day School had called to say that the boy ought to exert more scholastic effort. When Evelyn had told the boy about the call, he had angrily contradicted the teacher. Furthermore, when Bruce got home from work that night and listened to the story, he informed his wife that she couldn’t have heard the teacher correctly. The experience of her husband and son both turning on her had prompted Evelyn to march out of the house, an unprecedented act of rebellion, and to drive around La Jolla in search of a hotel room. She stopped short of checking into the Summer House Inn; a sense of maternal duty to her younger son drew her back home. But at this fateful appointment with Parzen, Evelyn described the chain of events leading to her blowup. It was the first time she had asked Parzen’s opinion about anything, and she did so without telling him what she thought of the incident.

Parzen replied that it sounded as if Bruce had unjustly made her out to be a liar, a seemingly innocuous pronouncement. Yet the sound of it triggered something in Evelyn. “It was the first time I had ever disagreed with Bruce that I felt I wasn’t wrong. I started to cry in a way I had never cried before in my life. It was like all of my life was breaking out.” Immediately Parzen moved closer, shifting from his chair to the ottoman upon which he normally rested his feet. Stroking Evelyn’s leg, he repeated over and over that her thinking wasn’t crazy. To this day Evelyn remembers being uncomfortable with the intimacy of the psychiatrist’s touch. But she was overwhelmed by her own emotional outburst. “I just had never cried like that. It was the first time I felt I could be right about anything. … I had lived for thirty-five years thinking I was always wrong.”

Parzen insisted that Evelyn’s husband attend the session with her the following week. Again Bruce dominated the meeting, reading from four sides of legal-size paper on which he had listed his wife’s “difficulties.” Today Evelyn can’t remember a single one of the items; she recalls only that “he was just so cold! He sat there smoking his cigarette and reading his list, and I remember feeling like an object. It was as if he had gone to a car mechanic and said, ‘Fix this and this and this, and I’ll pick it up at five o’clock.’ ” After about a half hour, she suggested that it wasn’t necessary for her husband to stay through the whole session. When Bruce walked out, the psychiatrist strode to the door and locked it. Then he walked back to the couch where Evelyn was seated. Parzen sat down and told Evelyn to hold onto him. “To this day I do not know what happened next,” Evelyn says. She doesn’t recall who made the first move, but somehow she and the psychiatrist wound up lying down on the couch, kissing and embracing.

She walked out of the office dazed and shocked; her main thought was that somehow the impropriety had been her fault. When she returned for her session the following week, the first words out of her mouth were an apology. Parzen's response was to move to the couch and beckon to her. At first she remained rooted to her chair, but finally, reluctantly, she acquiesced, and again by the end of the session the two of them were stretched out on the couch, kissing and cuddling.

The weeks that followed have become a blur to Evelyn. One reason is that from that point on, Parzen steadily urged her to consume more and more tranquilizers. They proved to be her Achilles' heel. She dislikes alcohol, but the pills entranced her; continue to this day to entrance her. "I'm the kind of person who figures that if two are good, eight are better," she admits. As the months passed, Parzen wrote fewer and fewer actual prescriptions; instead he urged Evelyn simply to help herself to the contents of the well-stocked medicine cabinet in his office, and she showed no restraint. Ultimately, she was swallowing forty to sixty pills a day: Valium, Quaaludes, Seconal, and a pharmacopoeia of other medications.

Beyond her growing (chemically induced) disorientation, the situation with Parzen stupefied her. Evelyn says from the time of their first embrace, Parzen harangued her with the statement that his relationship with her was personal, not professional. "This was drilled into me. Up until then [the first embrace], he had been Doctor Parzen. After that he was Zane." He reassured her he was in love with her, that she was the first woman other than his wife he had turned to in more than twenty years of marriage. She asked him why, then, she had to pay him (fifty-five dollars per fifty-minute session, which in July of 1975 increased to two session per week) and always his answer was the same. "He used to tell me, 'Evelyn, you're paying for the time, not for the caring.' "

If that was puzzling, so too was their physical relationship. At the same time he swore his devotion, Parzen restricted his physical contact to kissing and petting. Only after months did he have her perform oral sex; he didn't immediately reciprocate. It wasn't until late in 1976 that he had conventional sexual intercourse with her, an act he was to repeat seven times. Some days, however, he would move as if to penetrate her, then refrain from doing so. "It was a teasing process that I had a horrendous time dealing with," Evelyn later testified.

But if it took almost two years for her to commit actual adultery with Parzen, Evelyn's guilt about the emotional infidelity tormented her from the beginning, and she didn't exactly hide her feelings. Almost immediately she confided in Betty Shepherd about the developing romance, and of course Betty told her psychiatrist husband, Gary. The gossip prompted him to talk with Parzen, who occupied an adjoining office in the Prospect Street building. (In fact, the two men even split rent for the space, although their offices were physically separate.) When Shepherd informed his

professional neighbor about what Evelyn was saying, Parzen denied anything was amiss, chalking up the reports to Evelyn's imagination.

This explanation was plausible, Shepherd says today. "It's not uncommon for patients to feel they're in love and to have romantic feelings toward their therapists." Psychiatrists almost universally recognize a phenomenon known as "transference." It occurs when the patient projects onto the analyst his feelings about important figures from his personal past. Ethically, the psychiatrist is obligated to make the patient aware of what is happening, and what the true origins of the bewildering emotions really are.

So Shepherd knew that Evelyn's imagination might be the culprit, but he walked away from Parzen still feeling troubled. For one thing, Parzen also told Shepherd that Evelyn was "just neurotic." Yet to Shepherd it was easy to see that, in technical terms, Evelyn was more than "just neurotic": her ominous "borderline" traits also seemed to be worsening. Surely Parzen, of all people, had to know that.

Shepherd's uneasiness increased when Evelyn's confidants grew to include not just Betty and other women friends, but Shepherd himself. What he heard, he says, was "a story of a gradually deepening relationship." At times Evelyn was incoherent; at times the drugs made her seem drunk. But as the months passed, Parzen's strengthening hold over Evelyn became more and more apparent. In addition to promoting Evelyn's chemical and emotional dependence, Parzen began insisting that Evelyn also rely on him for all her medical needs, from routine checkups to arrangements for chest x-rays. And more: "He used to tell me he was the only one who loved me, that I belonged to him, that I would be in his life forever," Evelyn says. He liked to have her lie down on top of him in a position that would allow him to bring his legs up and lock them around her so she couldn't get away. He would hold her face still, and all she could see were those dark, penetrating eyes, and he would tell her over and over that he was all she had. He was everything.

Against all medical ethics, Parzen was using his sophisticated training to set himself up as Evelyn's personal god. Shepherd says. Yet even though Shepherd knew this was happening, and saw its harm, he couldn't figure out how to intervene successfully. He says that for a while he thought it possible that Parzen actually might have fallen in love with Evelyn, and might divorce his wife to marry her. Later, when Evelyn's condition deteriorated and true love seemed increasingly implausible. Shepherd did discuss the situation (naming Parzen but not identifying Evelyn) with another psychiatrist, who asked if Shepherd thought Evelyn might testify against Parzen. Going before the medical ethics committee (of the San Diego Psychiatric Society) would require first-hand testimony, the other doctor pointed out, and Shepherd responded that this was inconceivable. "I knew I never would have been able to convince her that what Parzen was doing was evil. She saw the two of them as being in love, J not as her being 'in therapy.' Secondly, I

felt if I had been able to show her that the relationship was only a hollow dream, she almost certainly would have killed herself."

Shepherd did take one other action: he talked to Bruce about Parzen's perverted hold over Evelyn, and says he urged Bruce to file a complaint with the ethics committee, believing the committee probably would have given weight to a complaint from a patient's husband. Although Bruce today says he doesn't recall that precise conversation with Shepherd, he does say that he was "rather ignorant as to what was legally required and ethically required [of doctors]. I didn't know at that time that sexual relations between a psychiatrist and a patient were unlawful. It seemed to me to be unethical, but illegal? 1 wasn't aware." In any event, Bruce did not investigate the possibility of filing a complaint against Parzen. Evelyn, he recalls, had "pleaded with me many times not to do anything that might hurt her or the relationship with Parzen, and I knew that any action I might take could hurt her." Even without Shepherd's worried words, it was obvious to Bruce that his wife's mental health was declining drastically. Besides her pill-taking and her wild ravings, Evelyn soon became unable to do the housework she had performed so efficiently for fourteen years. She even remembers the day in 1975 when she went grocery shopping at the Big Bear on Governor Drive. "1 stood in front of the canned goods, and I could not make a decision between buying white potatoes and sweet potatoes." Terrified, she left her cart in the aisle, walked out of the store, and drove home. She began to spend most of the hours she was away from Parzen in her darkened bedroom, in bed. "I became totally anorexic. I could go two to three weeks at a time and not eat." Or she would eat and then, from tension, vomit up the food.

Today Evelyn theorizes that Bruce came to view her as the only failure in his life. "And he couldn't tolerate that," she says. "He wouldn't accept any responsibility." She recalls a clear moment when she looked at him and realized that she no longer loved him. She had roused herself enough to accompany him on a business trip to Europe in the spring of 1976, but Bruce was under a lot of strain, and in the resulting anxiety and anger, she says she "realized that he meant nothing to me anymore. I did not feel anymore that there was an Evelyn." While in Austria, they cut the trip short and returned to San Diego; Evelyn says she couldn't tolerate her husband's anger and couldn't bear the separation from Parzen.

At the same time, Parzen gave her cause to fear more than Bruce's mere anger. Again and again the psychiatrist insisted that Bruce was trying to "gaslight" Evelyn — that is, convince her she was crazy so that she would kill herself. (Parzen drew the term from the 1944 movie *Gaslight,* in which Charles Boyer tried that ploy on his wife, Ingrid Bergman.) Increasingly Parzen urged Evelyn to leave her husband. She countered, '"What about my children?' And he would answer, 'You lost your children years ago.'" Finally, in June of 1976, she somehow found a furnished, dimly lit studio apartment in a complex on Via Mailorca, off Gilman Drive. She informed her husband she was

leaving, and “he moved my clothes for me. I was a problem he couldn't handle . . . .This is a ma'n who once said, ‘If you were more of an instrument, I’d know how to handle you.’”

Besides her clothes, Evelyn took with her four or five paintings and some art supplies. She still couldn’t conceive of divorcing Bruce and abandoning her teen-age sons, and managed to convince herself that the move was only a “separation.” Bruce agreed to give her $600 a month — but declared that she would have to pay Parzen his $110 per week out of that money. However, only a week or two passed before an incident occurred that almost ended not just her financial problems, but her very life.

The first Thursday in July, 1976, Parzen suddenly announced that it would please him if she would stop taking any more pills. She should go home and flush her supply of them down the toilet, he directed. She should be prepared to lose a few nights’ sleep, he warned, almost joking. Heeding his words, Evelyn says she stopped on her way to her apartment and bought some junk food and magazines to distract her from the expected insomnia. But before that first night had passed, she says, “I knew this was not going to be just a matter of losing sleep.”

She started vomiting and then couldn’t stop, long after her stomach was empty and her abdominal muscles ached with pain. The shock of sudden, total drug withdrawal sent her into convulsions several times. She hadn’t thrown out her pills — and she had hundreds of them — because she’d decided to surprise Parzen with them as a present. Throughout the withdrawal, however, she never touched them “because I had given him my word, and he had told me he wanted me to do it.”

As the weekend wore on and the nation celebrated its 200th birthday, Evelyn writhed on the floor of her apartment. She couldn’t bear the touch of sheets on her skin. Every part of her body ached, and several times she lost consciousness. “My body was itching, shaking. I had the cold sweats. I couldn’t sit still for two seconds. It was like every nerve ending had come right to the surface.” Yet somehow, after the fourth day, she showed up for her appointment with Parzen. “He told me he was very proud of me.”

Shepherd says it’s remarkable Evelyn lived through the weekend. Medical texts agree that sudden withdrawal from barbiturates is even more dangerous than sudden heroin withdrawal. Death is not uncommon; it occurs when the abrupt absence of the drugs causes the autonomic nervous system to go haywire, and as a result the heart fails to function properly. If the drug user doesn’t die, hp can suffer a convulsive seizure which could cause him to fall and break his neck. But Shepherd says it later became clear to him that what Parzen did to Evelyn with the drug withdrawal was part of a larger pattern involving other patients as well. “It’s not like he would give someone poison, but he would give them something that could kill them, or it could maim them,

or it could do nothing. . . . His actions had the sadistic kind of quality of a cat playing with a mouse.''

Another part of the pattern: even though Evelyn had tried a dozen times to kill herself during the months Parzen was seeing her, Parzen never had her hospitalized. Mostly Evelyn attempted drug overdoses, but once at home early in 1976 she even drank a pint of ant killer mixed with lemonade, only to be discovered unconscious and then taken by ambulance to Scripps Memorial Hospital. Parzen later showed up at her hospital bed and berated her for having chosen the wrong kind of poison, if in fact she were trying to kill herself. Each time she deliberately overdosed on pills he would immediately supply her with more. In every case, the suicide attempts were deadly serious, not simply disguised cries for help, says Shepherd. By the end of 1976 things had gotten so bad that Shepherd decided if official paths were blocked to him, he would have to take unofficial action. “It had become clear to me that even though she might kill herself without him, with him she was also likely to die.”

Shepherd described the situation to the chairman of the San Diego Psychoanalytic Institute, whose response was swift. The chairman telephoned Parzen and told him he didn’t care whether anything was going on or not. Evelyn should be transferred— immediately. When Evelyn showed up for her next appointment, the first Monday in 1977, she found Parzen glacial. He accused her of blabbing about their love affair, curtly referred to a mysterious phone call, and declared that she would have to stop seeing him for six months. After that they would be together again, he promised.

That morning Shepherd happened to be in his office (which adjoined Par-zen’s), and as he wasn't talking with a patient, he could overhear the ensuing fracas. Today he whispers what he heard: “'No, Zane! You can’t do this, Zane. Please, no. I’ll die.' Screaming, begging. For about thirty minutes. It was horrible.” Finally Parzen all but pushed the woman out his office door.

Evelyn recalls that “I was hysterical. My whole life was going.” She thought Parzen was upset about the risk of his wife discovering the affair; the notion that he had transgressed medical ethics never crossed her mind. Following his orders, she showed up the next day at the office of the psychiatrist to whom Parzen had transferred her, Dr. David Olenik. But Olenik talked about hospitalizing Evelyn, which further terrified her. “I was completely insane. Completely. I blurted out all sorts of things.” Her disorientation was equally apparent at the La Jolla design studio where she had managed the previous August to get a job; that same week she was fired. She called Bruce and unsuccessfully begged him to take her in. (The Walkers’ divorce, in which Bruce got nearly all the property and custody of the children, didn’t become final until months later, in the fall of 1977.) Finally Evelyn turned to Shepherd and in desperation she accepted his suggestion of checking into Mesa Vista, a psychiatric hospital in the Clairemont area.

She spent the spring of 1977 in and out of a variety of such hospitals, convinced that soon she and Parzen would be reunited. That conviction never faltered, she says, even though her loneliness' finally led her to start dating other men, including one who was twenty-two years older than she. Because this older man seemed to offer paternal protection, she married him in October of 1977. But the day after the wedding she knew she'd erred, terribly. "I wanted to be with Zane," she says. "I belonged to Zane. I didn't belong to myself, even. Evelyn didn't exist anymore. ..."

Her second husband turned out to be an alcoholic, and he beat Evelyn.

In May of 1978, after eight months of the marriage, she filed for divorce. The Shepherds and her parents subsequently helped her out financially after the court settlement left her with inadequate funds. Later she got a job as a receptionist in a chiropractor's office, but she couldn't seem to hold onto any job for very long. Throughout, she waited steadfastly for the man she was sure was the only one who would ever love her.

By November of 1978 she had glimpsed him on the streets of La Jolla a few times, walking along Prospect or Girard, but she had had no more contact with him than that since the day he kicked her out of his office. Still she hadn't lost her faith in him; she adored him. However, she was feeling miffed enough at his inattention to sit down and write a letter to Parzen outlining her feelings. She happened to mention the letter to Gary and Betty Shepherd, and that caught Shepherd's attention. Coincidentally, Shepherd had been approached in recent weeks by the psychiatrist friend in whom he had confided two years earlier. The friend had since become chairman of the San Diego Psychoanalytic Society's "impaired physician's" committee, and had just received an alarming report about Parzen's conduct with another woman. Both he and Shepherd wanted to do something to stop Parzen from preying on still more female victims. When Shepherd heard about Evelyn's letter, he interpreted it as perhaps the first sign that Evelyn was beginning to disengage herself from Parzen's influence, and might at last be able to help.

So one night in November of 1978, after she had dined with him and Betty, Shepherd drove Evelyn home and casually mentioned that Parzen was having some problems. Evelyn could help him by writing a letter describing the relationship that had developed between them. When Evelyn asked about the nature of Parzen's problems, Shepherd said it looked as if Parzen was having some emotional difficulties, and might be using poor judgment with regard to another patient's medication. The news of Parzen's emotional problems didn't shock Evelyn (since Parzen had spent hours pouring out his woes to her), but Evelyn asked in what manner Parzen was involved with this other patient. Today Shepherd says he didn't feel he could tell Evelyn at that moment about the truth, so he equivocated. Evelyn agreed to assist and dashed off a two- to three-page letter detailing her romance with Parzen.

At this point, Shepherd says he and his friend the committee chairman nursed genuine hopes of helping Parzen without ending his career. “He could have survived if he had agreed to stop seeing female patients and maybe had gotten into academics. Then the impaired physician’s committee would not have had to report this to the state,’’ Shepherd says. And when confronted with that alternative, Parzen at first seemed cooperative. He admitted to the general truth of the allegations relating to Evelyn and the other woman, and he agreed he needed help. He even put some of his admissions in writing. But then he balked, denying everything.

On Christmas Eve of 1978, Shepherd and the other psychiatrist visited Evelyn at her apartment and tape recorded an interview with her. She pinpoints that interview as being the first time she even suspected Parzen had done anything wrong to her. She says the chairman of the committee grew ashen as he listened to her account.

From that point through the next several months, however, she still was rent by such conflicting emotions that she hardly makes sense when describing the period today. Helping Parzen remained of paramount importance; she continued to love him madly. And her confidence in his love for her didn’t falter as she gradually learned of his sexual involvement with at least four or five other patients. “All those other people were crazy. I wasn’t,’’ she thought. (Parzen’s later testimony did indeed indicate that his sex with the other women was much kinkier and more sadistic.) At the same time, Evelyn’s growing belief that Parzen had seriously harmed her built to a certainty. But she says Parzen nonetheless could have reassured her with one phone call. All he had to do was call — and the fact that he didn’t do even that is just one of the host of reasons Evelyn and Shepherd today are convinced that Parzen actually wanted to be punished.

He wouldn’t stop her from hanging him, but he also wouldn’t willingly mount the gallows. So in January of 1979 the San Diego Psychoanalytic Institute held a hearing to decide whether Parzen should be barred from his regular teaching position at the institute. Evelyn says all her excitement centered on the chance to see him again; until the very last minute she was convinced he would walk up and put his arms around her. Only when Shepherd forbade her to approach Parzen for fear that he might kill her did her hopes begin to recede. When she finally laid eyes on him at the institute hearing, he sat completely bent over, his face distorted. “And I realized he was a very sick man.”

The institute did vote to end Parzen’s teaching and in April the San Diego Psychoanalytic Association expelled him as a member. Parzen resigned from the San Diego and American Psychiatric associations before those organizations could follow suit. At the same time, Shepherd had begun urging Evelyn to file a civil suit against her former psychiatrist/lover. Shepherd says, “I felt that she was owed some recompense for this really terrible atrocity that had been committed.” In July of 1979, she hired a local attorney and filed suit, without much expectation of

actually receiving any money, she claims. She says she simply felt swept along by the momentum of the events already set in motion, events that continued to accelerate. In August, at the urging of another San Diego lawyer, she flew up to San Francisco to consult with attorney Marvin Lewis (renowned for his prowess in defending "psychic injury" suits ever since he convinced a San Francisco jury that an accident on a trolley car had turned a young woman into a nymphomaniac). Lewis told Evelyn hers was the most exciting malpractice case he had seen in his fifty-year career. She dismissed her San Diego attorney and hired Lewis. Later that fall of 1979 the California Board of Medical Quality Assurance filed charges of gross negligence and incompetence against Parzen, citing his behavior with Evelyn and one other patient. Because of the board's action, Parzen's name leapt into the headlines.

The news articles in the press not only disclosed the impending state board hearing, but also Walker's suit, and the latter in particular provoked reaction. Today Evelyn retains a file of letters to the editor taken from the *La Jolla Light,* which castigate the *Light* for subjecting the socially prominent Parzen family to shame and ridicule by publishing news of the lawsuit. (The Parzens were especially active in the affairs of the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art.) By the beginning of 1980, Evelyn also had received a written death threat and a string of harassing phone calls. Her health was poor — she had back trouble, coughed up blood, vomited often, and suffered from incipient stomach ulcers. By that time she had gotten a minimum-wage job dishing up egg rolls at Ricksha Boy, the Chinese fast-food restaurant next to the ice skating rink inside University Towne Centre. One day she collapsed at work and had to be taken to a hospital by paramedics. But several events succored her throughout the year.

In March, a few days before the state board hearing was to begin in San Diego, Parzen confessed to every allegation against him and drew one of the most severe penalties ever levied on a psychiatrist. (The board not only suspended his license for a year, but also so restricted any future return to medicine as to make a repeat of the abuses impossible.) Evelyn was also heartened by the fact that her attorney, Lewis, convinced the judge presiding over her lawsuit to speed up the trial schedule dramatically in deference to Evelyn's financial hardship; the accelerated preparations for the May, 1981 date helped occupy her time. In September of 1980 she met and fell in love with a retired Marine sergeant named Paul, who worked as a West Coast representative of an Eastern business firm. The relationship became one of the most important things in her life. (Evelyn insisted that Paul's last name not appear in print.)

One other development during the course of the pretrial depositions had a profound impact on Evelyn's resolve. Under oath one day while being interviewed, Parzen casually admitted that several of the women with whom he had been sexually involved had killed themselves. Evelyn says, "I'll never forget the way he said, 'There could be more [than two or three women dead], I

just can't remember.' That was the first time I recognized that I'm the voice for those that can't talk." As much as they chilled her, the words also steeled Evelyn.

With the opening of the trial itself, terrible nightmares haunted her: nightmares of Parzen shooting her, of him committing suicide. She fretted that when she took the stand, the jury might think she looked too healthy; Shepherd and Lewis laughed at that particular fear. Because Parzen had already admitted to the truth of Evelyn's allegations prior to the first day of trial, the only major legal issue before the ten-woman, two-man jury was whether Evelyn had filed her suit within the statute of limitations — defined as one year from the date when a reasonable thinking person should have discovered his injury. Parzen's attorney argued Evelyn knew that Parzen had injured her the day he kicked her out of his office in 1977. Lewis countered that his client's knowledge of her injury didn't come until the winter of 1978.

In support of Evelyn's position. three local medical doctors and a psychologist took the stand against Parzen, an almost unprecedented action in a malpractice case. (Doctors traditionally have been notoriously reluctant to testify against colleagues.) And on July 12 the jury announced that Evelyn had filed within the limits of the statute. About two weeks later the trial entered a shorter second phase to decide how much money Parzen's insurance company owed her. Lewis totaled up $28,349 Evelyn had paid in medical expenses (including $8800 to Parzen himself), plus an estimated $2,039,149 in estimated future medical expenses, plus $2,063,057 in estimated lost community property (from Bruce), plus $840,000 in lost future earning ability (of Evelyn), plus $2,000,000 for pain and suffering — and asked the jury to award Evelyn a total of $6,970,555.

The San Francisco attorney had Evelyn stay out of the courtroom during much of the trial, but he consented to her presence on the day when word came that the jury had reached a decision. Except for Lewis, his wife, and a few friends, the room was still empty when Evelyn walked into it. She could hear the clock on the wall ticking. Then the bailiff appeared and Evelyn says that within seconds people began jamming into the spectators' section: reporters and other attorneys and curiosity seekers. "I sat back in the corner of the room, and I definitely had the sensation that my entire life depended on what these people were going to say." The judge spoke a few words, then the bailiff went over to read a piece of paper presented by the jury foreman. Evelyn recalls, "I heard him read 'four,' and I thought they were going to give me $4000, but after that the numbers kept coming and kept coming and kept coming. There was this collective intake of breath, and the numbers just seemed to keep coming.They totaled $4,631,666 — the biggest award in history for a psychic injury and the second biggest in history for medical malpractice. Caught up in a maelstrom of reporters and jurors and well-wishers, Evelyn had two thoughts: "I wanted Paul, and 1 wanted Zane."

Her legal battle didn't quite end there. The insurance company vowed it would appeal, and for a few months Lewis prepared for round two as Evelyn's award, held in "escrow," accumulated about a thousand dollars in interest per day. One day in November of 1981 she arrived home at the forty-six-foot ChrisCraft houseboat on which she and Paul were living in Mission Bay. The phone was ringing. It was Lewis, saying that the insurance company was willing to settle for two and a half million dollars. She told him to take the offer; she had other news. She told Lewis she had just come straight from Scripps Hospital — where doctors had informed her that Paul was going to die very soon, of advanced lung cancer.

"You know, when we were preparing for the trial, I used to laugh and say to Marvin [Lewis] and Gary [Shepherd] that we would win the case, and I would at last be secure — and then I would be hit by a truck," she says. "Well, I was hit by a truck." With Paul's death last March 14 (the two had married three months earlier), waves of the first anger Evelyn ever felt in her life rolled over her and exploded at times into an irrational rage.

I sensed traces of that anger, submerged but close to the surface, the very first time I met Evelyn at her University City condominium. They were minor traces — a sudden sharpness to her voice at times, a certain irritability. She and Paul sold the boat and bought the condo before Paul's death, but today only a photograph or two testifies to his former presence. More in evidence are remnants of Evelyn's past artistry. A seascape constructed from brightly colored felt cloth adorns the first-floor bathroom; in the living room hangs a portrait of her sons, which she painted when they were little boys. Whimsical dolls imported from around the world perch over the stone fireplace and on the shelves of a massive, hardwood bookcase. It's a comfortable but not an opulent place.

Evelyn received the check for one and a quarter million dollars (Lewis got the other half of the award) more than a year ago. Yet in many ways she acts as if the money isn't real. She's placed a local bank in charge of her investments, but her investment counselor there says her major desire is for reassurance that her principal is secure. She doesn't have to worry about paying for her weekly sessions with a psychologist. The money also allows her to sponsor six children in different foreign countries, and she has established a trust fund for cancer research in Paul's memory. She's done a bit of traveling, to New York City, for example, since his death, but she still insists on shopping for things on sale. "Because money can go," she says tautly. "I don't squander it. I don't take anything for granted." Furthermore, money can't bring her the things she most yearns for, such as the memory of a large part of her life. She can describe to the buttons the clothes Parzen was wearing on the day he evicted her from his office six years ago. But she can't remember the birth of her children. She knows what date she married Bruce Walker but she no longer retains any mental picture of the event. She's lost the memories and she's lost the

souvenirs that help most of us to summon our pasts. “Would you like to see what I have?” she asked me one day recently. “There’s not much to it.”

From an upstairs room she returned holding a small lavender satin pouch, and on the carpet she gently spilled out its meager contents. There was an old Sominex bottle containing her children’s baby teeth. Her favorite uncle’s watch. Two bibs bearing the words, “I’m a Sharp Baby” which her sons were given upon their births at Sharp Hospital. A collection of Mother’s Day cards from Bruce “from back when he still liked me.” She has one photograph of her boys on the lap of a department store Santa Claus. She has a few shots of herself as a girl, and one picture of Bruce at a ski resort. She has three letters from Bruce and two cryptic postcards from Parzen, the only items either man ever sent her through the mail. Finally, she has a tiny square clipped from the society pages of an old *San Diego Magazine*; it bears her only photograph of Parzen, a poor one in which his pipe obscures part of his face.

“All that I’ve got is now. And tomorrow. And I may not have tomorrow,” she says flatly. Her “nows” are mercurial. Grief overwhelmed her in the months after Paul’s death, but lately she’s been on an upswing. She’s begun volunteering a few hours each week as an office worker at the Old Globe Theatre, and now she sees her sons fairly often, the years of estrangement at last beginning to heal. She’s also working with a writer to produce a book about her experiences. And one of her most beloved projects is to establish a nationwide “support group” for women who’ve been abused by their psychological counselors. As a first step, she and organizers at the Center for Women’s Studies and Services in San Diego are starting a group which will meet weekly beginning March 15.

Evelyn talks about the latter with an almost missionary zeal. What Zane Parzen did to Evelyn Walker was not an isolated instance. Parzen alone still is facing three or four lawsuits filed by other former patients in San Diego, and at least one other psychiatrist here is being sued for similar malpractice. “I want the whole bloody world to know,” she says, eyes flashing, “because I don’t want it to happen again."

When she’s on this soapbox, she looks redoubtable, and she knows it. Similarly, she knows that when she dresses up and goes out, “I look like I’ve got the world by the tail! I look like I could handle anything!” But inside, she says, she feels as helpless as a newborn baby. I came to believe it, partly because she speaks so credibly, and partly because of the words of her friend, psychiatrist Gary Shepherd. He says she’s capable of collapsing so quickly it defies belief. If she’s on an upswing at the moment. Shepherd points out that only three or four months ago she drove down to the Ocean Beach pier, seeking to buy pills with which to kill herself. (She’d done this years before but this recent time the drug dealers thought she looked too old and didn’t trust her.) He points out that she’s still plagued by paranoid fears while driving an automobile that she’ll

suddenly lose control of the car and kill someone. Shepherd says only recently he's had to go out and find her, because she'd lost her bearings while driving the few blocks between her home and his office.

Shepherd says that before Evelyn met Parzen, she was like a cracked vase. Good psychiatric care would have glued together the cracks. "She wouldn't be a happy person, but she'd be okay today." Instead, Parzen brutally smashed her, and Shepherd thinks some of the pieces were lost irretrievably. Maybe, just maybe, another man in her life could put her back together again. "She blossoms under that kind of care," Shepherd says. Maybe in time she'll recover fully, but Shepherd doesn't think she will.

Evelyn writhes at any such judgment . She knows that a keystone of her lawyer's argument to her jury was that she'll never get better. Did the jury award her as much as it did because of that? And if so, what does it do to her own outlook on recovery? "I live with a terrible fear that if I do get better, somebody's going to say to me, 'Well, you got the money. You should be in a nuthouse for the rest of your life.' " It's a paralyzing thought, and in order to face the future she has had to reject it. "I think the people that sat on that jury would not be anything other than supportive;" she ventures. "I don't do any service to anybody in this world by not getting better," she says as if trying hard to hold on to that thought. "If I don't have the right to get my life as healthy as I can, who does? Nobody has gone through more pain ... I have to feel that I'm justified in being alive."

So she faithfully sees her psychologist in La Jolla, plus she's also taking a course in positive thinking through Terry Cole-Whittaker's church. She's also working with a Christian Science practitioner, and she looks forward to finding another husband who will care for her the way Paul did. She's doing everything she can think of to get well; her forty-third birthday is today so she figures she has a long time to live. For all of that, however, whenever she feels low, her first impulse — even today — is to seek out Parzen.

She's heard he's living in Scottsdale, Arizona, and selling cars for a living, and at times she's gone as far as the airport to buy a plane ticket there. The worst thing in the world that could happen to her would be for him to phone her; if he did, she doesn't think she could fail him. In a crazy sense, their lives are inextricable. He's the person who gave her a place in history, she believes. "I mean, I'm not having a book come out because of Bruce Walker. If I divorced Bruce Walker, would you care?" she asked ironically. "I always wanted to be connected to Zane, but I didn't think it would be like this."

She'll never hate him, she's sure. "How can you hate somebody that is so weak and so sick? He's so sick that there evil there, but he's sick and I can't ignore that." He did want to see her dead. She can't deny that. But at least part of her still believes he's the only person worth dying for.

After all, Zane was the first person to listen to her, to make her feel like a beautiful woman, to “let me know that I had a good mind, which is kind of funny, since he made hamburger out of it.”

Comments