

regular guest was a coup, a distant echo of the one achieved by Planck and Nernst for Berlin all those years before. And for Einstein, the benefits were the gratification of his usual desires. In part, he sought peace and quiet—the chance to do his work in an unfettered environment, in this case a pleasant cottage in Pasadena. And, just as Berlin had promised in 1914, Caltech offered him the company of men he could consider peers, including a surprising number of people working at the cutting edge of research Einstein himself had begun more than a decade before.

One such encounter had special poignancy, a meeting with Albert Michelson, whose experiments with Edward Morley on the speed of light through the ether—a substance that was supposed to be present everywhere, even in empty space—formed the background to Einstein's discovery of the special theory of relativity. Michelson was then seventy-eight years old and very ill (he died later that year). He and Einstein had a somewhat tense history. Michelson had believed deeply in the reality of the ether, and so for years after most other physicists had accepted Einstein's ideas without reservation, had kept hoping that special relativity might prove flawed.

But now, perhaps with some sympathy for physicists who found it difficult to embrace concepts they did not like, Einstein left such unpleasantness behind. In a speech at Caltech, he reminded the audience that Michelson had begun his work when Einstein was just three years old. Then, generously, he gave Michelson full credit for the outcome: "Without your work, this theory [special relativity] would today be scarcely more than an interesting speculation."¹⁸ It was a kindly lie, of course. Michelson's work had been tangential to Einstein's own intellectual development, and the theory of relativity would have remained a fundamental idea in twentieth-century physics with or without the perplexing results of the Michelson-Morley experiments. But Einstein deeply admired passion in science, and Michelson, whatever blinders he may have worn, had struggled to push the limits of experimental technique for decades. Einstein had no hesitation in honoring such a veteran, even one who had fought for a time on the wrong side of an honorable campaign.

But after that graceful nod to the glorious past, Einstein turned to the real business at hand. As far as he was concerned, the most important new ideas to be found in Pasadena turned on discoveries made at

Gropius's most famous prewar building before he started the Bauhaus had been the Fagus Factory in the town of Alfeld, an all-steel-and-glass structure completed in 1911. That building had been a radical step forward, not just in its use of materials but because of Gropius's explicit attempt to create a work space that would make the work within that space easier and more pleasant. Now he felt the need to argue his case again, recognizing that it was not obvious to everyone that modern architecture critically shaped modern life. Behind his analysis lay the fact that the material basis of existence, the actual daily reality of life in cities like Berlin, had already been transformed by steel, glass, trains, numbers, news and haste. Mendelsohn, more playful by far than either of his two more famous colleagues, made the same case in a surprisingly sweet poem titled "*Warum diese Architektur?*"—"Why This Architecture?":

*Think back just one hundred years:
 Crinoline and wigs
 Tallow light and spinning wheels
 General stores and craftsmen's guilds
 Then think of us, now, think of what
 surrounds you:
 Bare knees and a sporty 'do
 Radio and film
 Automobile and airplane
 Specialty shops and department stores.
 Don't think they're superficialities—
 the deeper meaning is in them.
 (Die literarische Welt, 9 March 1928)*

Mendelsohn, with considerable courtesy to those shocked by the new architecture, tried to explain what such meaning might be: "And so you ask, what is this architecture for?" He answered that it was simply what the times required, what each person needed to truly live now. "Certainly man remains man and the heavens are broad as ever/But the world around you is enormously alive, cities of millions, skyscrapers, eight-hour flights from Moscow to Berlin." The old was irredeemably past, so Mendelsohn demanded sincerity, the clarity to see the world as it was. "Only one who has no rhythm in the body—

do not think of jazz, be serious—does not understand the metallic swing of the machine, the humming of propellers, the enormous new vitality that stimulates, blesses, and makes us creative.” In such a new reality, modern human beings had just one choice: live now or rot.

To disavow our life is self-deception, is miserable and cowardly. . . . Therefore be brave, be smart. Grab life by the hair, right where its best heart beats, in the middle of life, the middle of technology, traffic and trade. Accept it just as it is. . . .³⁶

Be brave, follow one’s heart, be blessed. The religious note was no accident. The modern urge in art in Germany was deeply entwined with a felt need for salvation, for transformation. Gropius had the same essential impulse as Mendelsohn, though his buildings, with their sharp angles and extreme clarity of form, were strikingly different from the younger man’s “organic” structures. Humankind had fallen. It was the duty and power of art, of modern art, to raise all up again. In 1918, writing from the western front, Gropius had found himself “livid with rage sitting in chains through this mad war, which kills any meaning of life.”³⁷ For creative men and women emerging from that madness, their duty was clear: they had to find or invent reasons for living. Above all, whatever was sought or made had to be truly new, for the old was doubly damned: once just for being old, and then again for having killed so many that it killed meaning itself. The past had to be abandoned, Gropius urged his fellow Germans, and in its place, he said, “let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future,” one that would “one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith.”³⁸

That impulse inspired many beyond the ranks of architects and painters. Berlin’s *Novembergruppe*—the November Group—came together in 1918, dedicated to the twin goals of art and social transformation—more precisely, to using art to foster social change. The group pledged loyalty to a manifesto that grandly declared, “We regard it as our highest duty to devote our best energies to the moral cultivation of a young, free Germany.” Painters, sculptors, playwrights, actors, composers and art dealers all joined. Erich Mendelsohn was the leading architectural figure in the early days of the group, sharing with the rest in their commitment to the proposition that “all of us revolutionaries of

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(continued from front flap)

and the paralyzing fear that made it impossible . . . until his family's indomitable and courageous resolve finally released him.

Told in the alternating voices of mother and son, *There's a Boy in Here* is at once the heartrending yet inspiring story of a mother's unceasing efforts to understand her child's bizarre, destructive behavior, and the poignant self-portrait of a boy trapped in a maze of compulsion and obsession. It is an astonishing chronicle of one family's terrifying ordeal and the miraculous awakening that brought it to an end.

JUDY BARRON is a former teacher who is now a lyricist for singer Maureen McGovern. She and her husband live in New York City. **SEAN BARRON** continues his recovery from autism; after graduating from college, he became a rehabilitation aide in a nursing home, and he intends to pursue an additional degree in occupational therapy. He lives in Youngstown, Ohio.



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As a baby, Sean Barron seemed almost normal. Though he cried incessantly and hated being held, his parents told themselves it was just a phase. But as he grew older, his behavior became increasingly strange and uncontrollable, and the truth became all too clear: something was very, very wrong.

When Judy Barron and her husband Ron sought professional help, they were brusquely told that their son suffered from an incurable condition that would only get worse with time. They had never even heard the word before: autism.

In a room full of adults, Sean could not even recognize his mother and father. He rarely spoke and communicated through grunts and screams. He teased his little sister unmercifully. He developed intense fixations, such as an overwhelming fear of left-hand turns that made every family car trip a nightmare of temper tantrums. Life with Sean was impossible, but despite the odds, the Barrons refused to give up.

Year after year, they gave him the drugs prescribed by condescending doctors and followed the programs devised by patronizing psychologists. And though nothing seemed to work, they sometimes caught fleeting glimpses of the helpless child inside the stranger who shared their home. They were determined to free him, and somehow their love, their rage, their patience, their sheer *humanness* reached him at last.

A new Sean Barron appeared to tell of the years stolen from him by his mysterious disease. His account is utterly fascinating, for he remembers it all—the fury, the terrifying isolation, the desperate desire to reach out,

(continued on back flap)

course, for the phone, the angry voice that would say, "Come at once and get your son. How could you bring him here and expect any teacher to put up with this child?"

But no one called. I went to meet Megan at noon. She bounded out the door full of enthusiasm, trying to tell me everything at once. We went home and spent the afternoon together. At one point she looked up at me and said, "How do you think he could be doing, Mom?"

We both went to get him at 2:15. On the way home he was silent, not answering our questions. When he reached the house he exploded, tearing through the rooms knocking things over, yelling.

School was enjoyable to me. Of course, the big thing was that the structure was exactly the same every day. One of the things I really liked to do was to test crayon colors—how dark Pine Green really was compared to other dark shades, or how light Spring Green was on a piece of paper. I could compare colors for hours at a time, and school wasn't really that long. I liked paint in the same way—the dark colors mostly resembled black; therefore, both the dark paints and the dark crayons were mysterious to me. Even though Midnight Blue looks black, I'd think, how dark will it really be if I try it on paper? It was so fascinating to explore different colors that looked the same but really weren't the same as black. Often I made rainbows consisting only of my dark colors. I loved to compare the way they looked on paper to the way they looked on the crayon itself. The light colors didn't interest me because I could tell what they would look like on paper. Black, though, was different. It was a color I couldn't "see." I could, of course, see the crayon itself, but not the actual

THERE'S A BOY IN HERE

color. What made black? Was it possible to find a crayon even darker than black? These kinds of questions kept me fascinated for hours, and my fascination carried over to the other dark colors as well.

To this day, we don't know how Sean managed to stay in school. We did have one undeniable advantage—Ron was a teacher in the same school system where Sean was a student. We knew many of the teachers, as well as the principal and superintendent. It was obvious that they made a real effort to accommodate Sean and us. Years later one of his teachers told us that when she gave an instruction to the class, Sean would begin to bang his head against his desk. He would continue to do so unless she came to him and explained the directions over again, slowly and patiently, until he understood.

Still, had he behaved in class the way he did at home, no teacher could have allowed him to remain. Somehow, the pressure of twenty-five other kids, the teacher's authority, and the regimentation and regularity of the schedule kept him in check. On conference day his teacher told us, "Well Sean tries, but things aren't easy for him. And he should pay more attention." We were thrilled.

It was clear that Sean was not an easy pupil. At the end of his first-grade year he was promoted, and we received a note from his teacher. It began, in lovely script, with an explanation of how difficult Sean had been to handle; then the handwriting began to deteriorate as she described his erratic and often disruptive behavior until, at the end of the note, we could barely decipher the final sentence. As far as we could tell, she wrote that she was leaving the teaching profession and taking early retirement.