

In the dry-goods section of Leggett's department store in Lexington, VA, Mrs. Hinton's hat bobbing above bolts of cloth caught the attention of Sally and her mother. Mrs. Hinton's son Billy was best friends with Sally's brother Bob. Upon seeing Sally and her mother, Mrs. Hinton announced "Oh, Billy just received a postcard from Bob. Apparently he loves his new school."

Mrs. Munger, rubbing some velveteen between forefinger and thumb, responded distractedly, "Oh, that's good, we hopped he had gotten there okay."

Ten days before, the Mungers packed a steamer trunk full of warm clothes for fifteen year old Bob and drove him to the Lynchburg, Virginia, train station. After eight hours on the Lynchburg train, he had to change stations in New York. Mr. Munger told his son to carry the trunk from Penn Station to Grand Central and to locate the overnight train to a town near the Putney School, the Vermont boarding school he was to attend.

Then they left him and apparently never wondered if those connections had worked for the boy, who had not traveled alone before, or even if he had made it to Putney at all. They had heard nothing since dropping him off and never called the school to check. Mrs. Munger told that story countless times, laughing gaily at her recollection of Mrs. Hinton's shock.

Looking back, Sally observes, it could be my parents were a bit on the less-than-diligent side, even for the times. My early years sound a bit like the legends of children raised by wolves. But, all the same, when I compare the lives of children today, monitored, protected, medicated, and over scheduled, to my own unsupervised, dirty, boring childhood, I believe I had the better deal.

Drew grew up on a farm in Clarke County, VA. A precocious reader and superior student, she was sent to Concord Academy, a coeducational college preparatory school in Concord, Massachusetts. She was chosen to participate in an East-West Travel Seminar that sent students to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union each summer. The purpose of the Quaker led seminar was to promote understanding in an attempt to foster peace.

Drew went from Concord Academy to Bryn Mawr College where she became involved in the civil rights movement, traveling to Birmingham, Alabama, with another student group sponsored by the same people who led the seminar in eastern Europe. As president of the Student Self-Government Association, she led the successful effort to do away with *in loco parentis*, the notion that the college functioned in place of the parents. Autonomy, sold as freedom, was achieved.

Drew, retired President of Harvard University, accomplished historian of American life, author of prize winning books, proudly proclaimed to her college age daughter, "I eliminated parietals at Bryn Mawr!" Her daughter looked at her blankly and asked,

“What are paretals?” Drew considers the question a tribute to her success. (Paretals are rules governing visits from members of the opposite sex to a college or university dormitory.)

“Why don’t you just live and let live?” he said when she confronted him with his behavior! “It’s my life to live. Why should what I do bother you?”

“I’ll tell you why I can’t just ‘live and let live’” she replied. “Because I love you. I want the best for you. Your life is not really your life. You life is also my life, my responsibility. I’m trying to be a good friend to you. Rather than ‘live and let live,’ I want to ‘love and let love.’”

Aristotle believed a good person was inconceivable apart from good friends. Only a friend knows when to press and when to hold back. Only a friend has the right to hurt you. And truth-telling is inherently painful.

University students were asked to explain why they avoided responding to some situation in which a friend was engaging in self-destructive behavior—say, a friend was dealing in drugs, or driving drunk, or cheating on an exam. A popular justification for not intervening was, “He is my best friend? Who am I to judge?” Another was, “I was afraid that if I said anything she would get mad and never speak to me again.”

You have heard of the epidemic of loneliness afflicting us in this moment. Some wise observers believe this loneliness is the outcome of privileging ‘live and let live’ over ‘love and let love.’ Or, in other words, of privileging autonomy over accountability. The difference between autonomy and accountability is “a love that touches indifference” (Linda Gregg).