

# A Creative Senior Citizen with Likely Bipolar II Disorder and Likely Histrionic Personality Disorder Expresses Herself

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## Abstract

***Background:** The representation in multiple media of the expressions of a creative senior citizen with mood and personality disorders is valuable for clinical, research, and teaching purposes. **Objective:** To document the occurrence of likely bipolar II and histrionic personality disorders in a creative senior citizen utilizing oral and written testimony and drawings by the subject herself. **Methods:** The author, a close friend of the subject during her final two decades, examines posthumously her memoirs, notes, letters, drawings, photographs, and related materials to produce a psychological record of her life illustrating expressions of sadness, loss, originality, excessive emotionality, and attention seeking. **Results:** Oral monologues, written notes, and drawings by the subject document the presence of likely bipolar II and histrionic personality disorders in an artistic senior citizen. **Conclusions:** The occurrence of likely bipolar II and histrionic personality disorders in a senior citizen is confirmed by means of the creative works of the subject in multiple media. This article demonstrates the value of the posthumous synthesis of the extant works of individuals exploiting the technical capabilities of a publication on the Internet to reproduce sounds and images (German J Psychiatry 2002; 5: 5-23)*

*Keywords:* aged, autobiography, bipolar disorder, creativeness, depression, histrionic personality disorder

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*Note:* This article contains sound files, which can be played by pressing on the [blue underlined](#) text. A program that can play MP3 files must be installed on your computer (e.g. [Windows Media Player](#)).

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## Introduction

Depression, the most common diagnosis in psychiatric populations (Goodwin and Guze, 1996), afflicts senior citizens as well as the general population. Surveys reveal that 5 to 12 % of men and 10 to 25 % of women experience a major depressive episode during their lifetimes (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). While mood disorders, including depression and

hypomania, are associated with morbidity and mortality, there may also be a possible beneficial aspect of mood disorders, namely, an association with creativity (Jamison, 1993). Genetic and environmental influences may lead to the production of original work by individuals experiencing depression and hypomania. Paradoxically people who feel hopeless, helpless, and worthless may nonetheless make outstanding contributions.

Senior citizens may experience the impetus to remarkable creativity. There may be sadness at the recognition of missed opportunities. On the other hand, retired individuals may be

afforded the luxury of time unencumbered by jobs, spouses, and families to complete extensive original works that could not be accomplished during earlier decades.

The current article is a multimedia retrospective, posthumous documentation of likely bipolar II and histrionic personality disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) in a senior citizen. The remarkable capabilities of the Internet are utilized to incorporate visual and sound segments. This paper demonstrates some of the vast resources of an Internet journal to display representations of a human being. Students may utilize the sound files for their education. The audio segments can be replayed to facilitate the ability to comprehend foreign accents. Practicing clinicians need to be able to understand people of multiple backgrounds despite errors in grammar and pronunciation. Real patients often do not follow textbook rules in their speech. The creative productions of troubled senior citizen are utilized in this article to document her likely bipolar II and histrionic personality disorders.

## Methods

### Subject

For more than two decades the author lived in the apartment adjacent to the subject of this report in a city on the Atlantic coast of North America. The author made the acquaintance of the subject when she was in her eighth decade. Over the course of several years they became friends. Their close friendship flourished during her ninth and tenth decades. For several years the subject invited the author to come over to her apartment for coffee on Sunday afternoons. Eventually he helped her to establish contact with agencies for senior citizens to obtain entitled benefits including health insurance, nutritional supplements, and home health care. Additionally he learned about her remarkable life.

When the author learned that the subject enjoyed music, he gave her a hand-held tape recorder and a few audiocassettes of recorded musical performances. She was delighted. Her home health aide suggested that she record her memoirs on audiotapes, a task that she undertook in her ninth and tenth decades. She had also apparently recorded some recollections on audiotapes in conjunction with a written journal in her seventh and eighth decades. Since the author realized that these are valuable documents for historical, sociological, anthropological, psychological, and psychiatric research, he suggested that she donate them to the local library. With her approval he contacted the librarian to be told that interviews could be conducted employing the oral history methodology in which one person asked questions and another transcribed the answers. However, the subject, who was unhappy with the increasingly frequent visits of home health

aides, social workers, and nurses, refused because she hated having strangers in her apartment. In response to the author's suggestion that she donate the audiotapes to the library, she initially stated that she wanted no one to hear her audiotapes. When the author challenged that statement by suggesting that she dictated memoirs about her life on carefully numbered audiotapes to be heard, she then agreed. However, she stipulated that she did not want the material to be heard during her lifetime. She gave the author permission for the posthumous publication of her story and the supporting material. She stated that the audiotapes and all other materials may be published and donated to a library for research purposes after her death. She explicitly gave permission for the publication in full of any and all of the audiotapes, journals, notes, letters, photographs, and all other materials that she left for the author. Over the last years of her life, she repeatedly pleaded to the author, "Remember me. Don't forget me."

In accord with discussions with the subject before her death, the items retrieved from her apartment after her death are included in the Special Collections of the Milton S. Eisenhower Library of The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, United States of America. For this article the author employs the contemporary psychiatric practice of describing individuals in general terms without revealing uniquely identifying information. As an academic clinician who has published several articles about single cases (Brašić, 2001; Brašić and Barnett, 1997; Brašić and Perry, 1997a, b; Brašić et al., 1997, 1999, 2000), the author presents this material in the form of a case report. Due to the atypical situation that the author, a physician, was a friend of the subject, but not her treating physician, he employs a discursive narrative approach for this document. The author reviewed neither the medical nor other health records of the subject. Instead, he reviewed the journal, documents, letters, notes, photographs, drawings, and other materials that she left. In order to present the subject as a creative living human being, the author includes drawings and oral monologues by her. Among some of the remarkable items is a notebook which is apparently a translation from Russian to English of a biography of Peter the Great. There are photographs that appear to date from early in the past century. Some of the photographs are dated from the 1930s. They confirm some of the remarkable narratives recounted by the subject. This article contains brief edited segments of the audiotapes of her dictated memoirs. Thus, readers may listen to her explain her life in her own words. The short passages incorporated in the sound presentations in this article are chosen because they depict her feelings about important people in her life. The sections presented here document major relationships of the subject. Frank expressions by the subject concerning others are presented in full without removing unfavorable aspects. For example, the subject expresses negative concepts concerning some of her close acquaintances. They are maintained in the sections included in this article. Therefore, the goal in the brief segments contained herein is to fully illustrate the subject as a human being with strengths and flaws. The segments recorded here are representative of the body of mate-

rial that she left. In accord with the policy of the *German Journal of Psychiatry*, the anonymity of the individuals discussed in this article is preserved by utilizing general designations in lieu of proper nouns. The author added his transcriptions of these audiotape segments; however, the spoken text contains additional nonverbal sounds that convey the feeling and emotion that are absent from the printed text. Additionally the spoken segments reveal both latency of response and paucity of speech consistent with a major depressive episode in some segments and mild pressure of speech consistent with hypomania in others. The audiotape segments may therefore be employed by students who aspire to communicate with senior citizens as aids to the comprehension of both verbal and nonverbal statements.

The data for this paper is primarily obtained from the written journal and the dictated audiotapes of the subject. Segments were selected from the audiotapes to illustrate some of the events of her life that may result in both the depression and the creativity of her final decades. A comprehensive examination of the subject's life requires not only a thorough investigation of her interactions with those whom she encountered throughout her life, but also an assessment of how she influenced and was influenced by the cultural, political, and social events of Europe, Asia, and North American during the last century, and is beyond the scope of this article. Instead the goal of this paper is to provide representative data to illustrate both the mood and personality disorders and the creativity of the subject.

The author provides the material to document the events described chronologically, although the records were made many years later. This article contains a few relevant spoken segments dictated by the subject to an audiotape recorder as edited sound files. The author's transcriptions of the spoken words are provided. Following each sound segment, the author presents a transcription of the sound segment. When the segment is in French, the author provides firstly a direct transcription in French and secondly a translation of the text from French into English. The subject has a thick Russian accent in both English and French. Also she does not follow the rules of grammar or pronunciation in either language. Therefore, the transcriptions represent the attempts of the author to express her utterances in the each language and to represent the French segments in idiomatic English.

Although excluded from this manuscript, there are many portions of audiotapes and notes about musical, literary, and visual artists. Several segments describe sadness concerning death and disability. For example, she mourns the deaths at an early age of the poet Pushkin and the composers, Chausson and Tchaikovsky. She speaks sadly about the deafness of Beethoven. In fact, she became severely hard of hearing in her last years. She also mentions with sadness the story of the death by suicide of Vincent van Gogh while experiencing a depressive episode. The wall of her apartment was decorated by a reproduction of his painting of sunflowers. The subject

herself considered suicide. Audio Segment 16 documents a possible suicide attempt. In order to document the artistic originality of the subject, this article is illustrated with [figures](#) containing drawings most of which were produced in her ninth and tenth decades. Thus her interest in the creative works of composers, painters, and writers is reflected in her own writings, dictations, and drawings.

## Case Report

The subject died at the age of 95 years after a short illness in the city on the Atlantic coast of North America where she had resided for the preceding three decades. She was born in Russia. Apparently she gave birth to a son when she was 17 or 18 years of age. Her son apparently perished in international conflict at the beginning of his third decade.

### Marriages to European husbands during her fourth decade

Around the beginning of her fourth decade she apparently abandoned her family by leaving Moscow to go to live in Austria with a German who sought to escape the Nazis.

[Audio Segment 1.](#) A senior citizen describes experiences with husbands.

Transcription [in English] of Audio Segment 1

As [a man's name], my dear husband, O [the man's name], why didn't you understood [sic] me? I was so much in love with you. And you loved me terribly. 'Tis why I came to rejoin you from my own country in Moscow. [Be]cause at that time, I couldn't conceive to live without you. Unfortunately you understood too late because I was hurt in my pride and I never could forgive it at that time where [sic] I was young. I was certainly wrong to tell you truth, [the man's name], because you became jealous and this is the egoistical side of men. It was stupid to be jealous because I left everything for him to come to Europe to stay with him. And he breaked [sic] out everything because [of] his jealousy. When he realized that he had been unfair, bitter, temperamental, it was too late. As a result, I left him for another. It was [a second man's name], who helped me a lot to take over with my broken heart. Of course, I was very grateful to him for it. Then when I was in [the Asian country in which second man worked], [the second man's name] wanted to start a divorce [with the first man]. I wrote to [the first man], and he saw that it was

very serious now, started to beg me to come back promising very happy life with me, and so on and so on, but, uh, [the second man] was determined [sic] to marry me. And then [the first man] realized that there was nothing else to do. So he began to write to [the second man] blaming me in his letters. It wasn't very pretty, you can believe me. Everything he said, it was in his disadvantage. [The second man] didn't like it because he knew the truth, I told him, and he was very powerful and willing. So at the end of one year, we [the first man and I] got divorced, and [the second man and I] married at [an Asian city] in 1936.

[Audio Segment 2](#). A senior citizen describes a dream about a former husband, the second man in Audio Segment 1. She relates the events that adversely affected their marriage and eventually led to their divorce.

Transcription [in English] of Audio Segment 2.

So, it makes me remind that I had a dream with [the second man]. It's very strange. I would dreamed with him before never. I tried to remember the dream, but it seems to me it was a rather pleasant dream. He appeared to me very kind, and exactly what had been in our lifetime before the troubles had occurred, started. Usually I dream a lot, and sometimes my dreams are very, very predictive. I have two or three in my life, I never, ever forget. Just because they were, two or three of them, extremely predictable. I don't think that this dream is very significant because it wasn't very clear and it's gone. Unless, unless, he tortured himself, or maybe, because sometimes I, reminds me, and my recollection is, isn't very kind after all he did to me. Of course, I only wish him to be tortured, always never be in peace because he was very, very ugly to me. What would be your reaction if you found your husband with your servant, nude, both of them, in your bathroom? That was the beginning of my unhappiness, and the discord between my husband and myself. What a [sic] awful feeling to be before that destructive vision! I was really struck at that moment. I couldn't pronounce one word, one single word. And, like, I was like paralyzed. The only thing I want to do, just go away. But he stopped me, telling that if I go, then he will kill himself, went to the bedroom, took his revolver, and back to the bathroom, he locked the door. So I remained at home, and the next thing I did, I

told him that it's over between us. Later on, we will see what is going to happen. Unfortunately, nothing good came out because he was arrogant and too proud and humiliated [sic] because I discovered his dirt. From now then, we lived under the same roof as two enemies, keeping silent, before the society, of my own agony. And in that manner, each and all of our relationships never had an idea about the dramatic situation I was living in, and continued to believe in our happiness, because until that day, that unhappy day, I was very happy with [the second man]. Naturally, I wouldn't give up my happiness that easily if he asked me forgiveness. But he would never do that. He was too proud! And I don't know what he figured out in this situation, was just dreadful.

She reports in her journal that she commenced her abstinence from sexual relations with the second man in the fifth or sixth year of their marriage. Her servant reportedly bore the son of that husband. The subject then had constructed a residence separate from her husband for herself, "*mon 'petit manoir,' avec passion sans limite* [my 'little manor' with limitless passion]" according to her journal. She lived there alone without her husband. Figure 1 ([Appendix](#)) is a drawing from her journal of her little manor.

[Audio Segment 3](#). After a performance of a passacaglia, a senior citizen reminisces about the beauty of another recording of that work in the beautiful house in Asia that she left 34 years earlier apparently in 1944. This segment was apparently recorded in 1978.

Transcription of Audio Segment 3.

Of course, with that beauty I am carried along to my home... . And that beautiful passacaglia, and record even better than this performance. I don't remember who was the conductor. I think it was [a man's name]. Not a souvenir. Thirty-four years passed by since I left my beautiful, beautiful jewelry home which I created by my own hands and my spirit and my heart. So difficult to conciliate [sic] with such a lost [sic] even after such a long time. Sometimes I would like to know who is in possession of my former home. And then I say to myself, "For heavens sake, forget forever."

### **Divorce from her last husband and subsequent relationships with men in Europe at the end of her fourth decade and in her fifth and sixth decades**

[Audio Segment 5](#). A senior citizen describes her experiences

returning to Europe after living in Asia with her husband. In the section following this sound segment, she speaks at length of *Tristan und Isolde*. She states that the love of Tristan and Isolde was forbidden like the love between her and the third man. She then goes on to complain about her loneliness in North America after the death of the third man.

Transcription [in English] of Audio Segment 5.

When we came back to [a European country] in 1945 after seven months in [an Asian country's] concentration camp, he was arrested with others by [the] government with me, put in prison with the others. I was trying to help him again because he was so miserable in prison during two weeks, I think. I went every day to him bringing him the food. So, he was crying and was complaining of course. It was terrible. I already talk about it. So, would you believe, that as soon he was out of the prison, the same he was before. So, that was finished, finished, finished. And he wouldn't believe [that] I [would] divorce him. But I was very firm and *implacable* [not capable of being appeased]. So we divorced at 1947. I had a situation, I was working, and then I, at an American officer's club, I met [a third man's name] to my unhappiness because he was married and had a lot of children. He was losing but... . Obvious escape out of destiny. So it was written in a line. But I was very with this man for eighteen more years, wondering on his bed to my loneliness. Came into this country, I left believing. But now it's different because I have my eyes wide open. And there is nothing to believe in any more. It would be too long to give you the reason of my disappointment, but on a bay basically it's a lack of honesty. And everything, everything is wrong, everything, even dangerous. But what can I do? I can't go anywhere. Because every day without money you have no freedom. And also I think it's too late to start anything. And I better stay where I am 'til my last day which, I hope, it's not too far away. I looking really forward. Just take it easy. I never go out. I know nobody as a relationship, I am not looking for. And, uh, to tell you frankly, I do prefer much, much better to read because you can learn something, even a lot from the interesting book. Because it is the best way to escape the animals, the wild wildness around, which is very powerful in this country, and I think it's definitely downhill. Everything here, it changed

for the worse. And as a victor says, "God takes out the brain of those whom he disliked." And I think it's very, very appropriate. Existing circumstances in this country have a consolation, absolutely nothing. And I feel desperately lost in the ocean.

[Audio Segment 13](#). A senior citizen describes her recollections of an Englishman. She last saw him in 1948; she dictates her notes in 1990. She describes her friendship with an Englishwoman, who is deceased.

Transcription [in French] of Audio Segment 13.

Oui, c'est une histoire *and* événement très agréable à revivre *and* chaque fois que je l'entends j'ai un très grand *dream* joua [sic] joyeux... mais tristesse à même temps parce que l'histoire de [an Englishman] a mal fini pour lui. Mais c'est une histoire de longues, longues années. Au temps que je me souviens, c'est en 1948 que je rencontrais [the man's name] et nous sommes en 1990 *so long time ago*. Mais ce souvenir reste très vivant malgré des années et car [the man's name] m'a rendue un moment, séjour extrêmement agréable et je me suis attachée encore d'avantage à l'Angleterre que j'ai me déjà bien. J'ai visitée ce pays-là à plusieurs reprises et toujours charmée par le peuple ou plutôt les personnes que je rencontrais et qui me... bien parce que très distinguées, sentimentaux, et leur manière absolument exquise auquel je ne peu pas rester indifférente. Je toujours songeais à l'Angleterre mais le destin a voulu que je face en tour vers l'Amérique. Longtemps j'ai correspondée avec une amie qui s'appelle [a woman's name] et qui m'était absolument attachée malgré la distance que nous séparait. Non, nous sommes correspondues pendant des années mais malheureusement elle de très malade et finalement elle a quittée ce monde. J'ai eu une grande peine de la perdre et malgré ce temps définitif je garde ses lettres et ses photographies.

Translation [in English] of Audio Segment 13.

Yes, it is a story and event very agreeable to revive and each time that I hear it I have... a very agreeable dream... . But sadness at the same time because the story of [an Englishman] ended poorly for him. But it is a story from years long past. At the time that I am remembering, it is in 1948 that I met [the man's name] and we are in 1990 *so long time ago*. But this memory remains very lively despite the

years and because [the man's name] gave back to me a moment, stay extremely agreeable. And I am attached in body more to England than... . I visited that country repeatedly, and always [was] charmed by the people or, rather, the persons whom I met and...well because very distinguished, sentimental, and their absolutely exquisite manner to which I cannot remain indifferent. I... dream of England but destiny... that I face towards America. Long ago I had corresponded with a friend called [a woman's name] and who was absolutely attached to me in spite of the distance that separated us. No, we had corresponded during the years, but unhappily she [became] very ill, and finally she left this world. I have a great pain to lose her... . definite temps... I keep her letters and her photographs.

[Audio Segment 14](#) [Continuation of Audio Segment 13]. A senior citizen describes her recollections of an English-woman, who died at the age of 72 years, in 1980, ten years before the dictation of this audiocassette.

Transcription [in French] of Audio Segment 14.

Après sa mort une de ses filles, elle en avait deux, m'avait écrit une très, très touchant lettre parce que de son vivant [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13] parlait à sa famille de moi probablement en termes très élogieux. J'ai bien répondu à la lettre de [a second woman's name] qui m'a énormément touchée. Et voilà, la page avec [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13] est tournée. Elle est morte à l'âge de soixante-douze ans. Il y a dix ans de cela. C'est un fait dix neuf cent quatre vingt. Adieux, adieux, chère [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13]... . nous sommes connues en France au cours de *dinner party* chez des amis. Et c'était... mais la correspondance continuait pendant des années. Vous savez que les anglais... difficiles pour obtenir l'amitié, mais lorsque l'amitié est née,..., entre, on ne peut pas les séparer. C'est que passait entre [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13]... pendant que nous étions déjà amies, et c'était jusqu'à la fin de sa vie. C'était une très bonne personne d'une distinction anglaise...presque tuée, pauvre [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13]. Bonjours à l'amitié, elle est devenue... . J'ai les *photographs*... toujours... seule... mais elle souffrait physiquement... .

Pauvre [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13], pauvre chère amie... l'impression que je serais beaucoup plus heureuse en Angleterre... .

Translation [in English] of Audio Segment 14.

After her death one of her daughters, she had two of them, wrote me a very, very touching letter because in her life, [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13] spoke to her family of me probably in very flattering terms. I well responded to the letter of [a second woman's name] which touched me enormously. And behold, the page with [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13] is turned. She is dead at the age of seventy-two years. That was ten [years] ago. It is nineteen hundred eighty. Farewell, farewell, dear [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13]... we knew [each other] in France in the course of a dinner party at the house of friends. And it was... but the correspondence continued during the years. You know that the English... difficult to obtain friendship, but when friendship is born... between, one cannot separate them. That is what took place between [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13]... during which we were already friends, and it was until the end of her life. She was a very good person of an English distinction... almost killed, poor [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13]. Good day to friendship, she became... . I have the photographs... always... alone... but she suffered physically... . Poor [the woman's name mentioned at the end of Audio Segment 13], poor dear friend... . the impression that I was much happier in England... .

### Experiences in North America during her seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth decades

Around the beginning of her seventh decade she began to work as maid for wealthy women. She apparently emigrated to North America at the start of her seventh decade by accompanying a rich lady on a cruise to North America. She then worked as maid for other well-to-do wives in North America. Her photograph albums contain records of the subject dressed in her own clothes on the estates of her employers suggesting that she is the lady of the house, not the servant of the lady of the house. Figure 2 ([Appendix](#)) is a drawing apparently from her ninth decade illustrating a scene from an estate of her employer in western North America. Around the middle of her seventh decade she retired from her work as a domestic to live as a senior citizen in a one-

bedroom apartment in a city on the Atlantic coast of North America. Although the apartment building had tenants of all ages, her rent was drastically low due to the laws limiting the rents of senior citizens.

[Audio Segment 16](#). A senior citizen speaks about her decline in health in 1979. She states that she took indomethacin (Indocin) for back pain. She describes an incident of feeling terrible after drinking whiskey after taking pills. She states that she never did that again because she realized how valuable life is. She also reports that two years after feeling sick with liver and kidney disease, she felt much better. She felt good enough to consider getting a job. She was apparently 74 years old then.

Transcription of Audio Segment 16.

1979. I talk previously about my decline in health. Nothing, absolutely nothing, of that, because two years later I feel much better than before. I [do not] have any troubles with my kidney or my liver. Absolutely nothing, and I am even ready to take work. Now, you know what happening, the trouble I explain previously. I used to take Indocin for my back, and then I took a drink, whiskey, the same day, and, after I took pills, and that [is] why I was so, such a bad situation, because I take a pill and alcohol and really, very, very bad. I hurted [sic] later on. And I understood all troubles I had in that unfortunate morning and at night first. But since, I'm very careful. I never do that any more. I'm thinking, you know, thinking in life, it's very important. Oh, gosh.

[Audio Segment 17](#). A senior citizen speaks about the death of Ernest Chausson at the age of 41. She comments on the statements of the man who introduces musical performances on a radio broadcast. She then states that he lived in an age in which people practiced more than one profession. She states that Chausson was an attorney and a composer and that Borodine and Moussorgsky were physicians and composers. She may be speaking directly to the author of this article, another physician and composer.

Transcription [in French] of Audio Segment 17.

Ernest Chausson, contemporain de César Franck, est mort à l'ensuite d'un accident de bicyclette à l'âge de quarante-quatre ans. *Isn't that terrible?* Cette émission consacre... musiciens qui devenaient musiciens, compositeurs, tout en une autre profession, comme Alexandre Moussorgsky, qui était *scientist* dans le *medicine*, et puis Ernest Chausson

était avocat de profession. Et encore d'autres évidemment qu'ils ne savaient pas qu'ils étaient parce que ils avaient les deux professions... devenus musiciens, par exemple, Alexandre Borodine à l'âge de quarante ans, il fait les compositions magnifiques, comme *Prince Igor* et d'autres. Il ne voulait pas renoncer sa profession d'origine de *medicine*. C'est pour cela que cette émission... *Who Am I? Qui suis-je?*

Translation [in English] of Audio Segment 17.

Ernest Chausson, contemporary of César Franck, died following a bicycle accident at the age of forty-four years. Isn't that terrible? That radio program consecrates... musicians who became musicians, composers, all in another profession, like Alexandre Moussorgsky, who was scientist in medicine, and then, Ernest Chausson was attorney by profession. And still others evidently who did not know what they were because they had two professions... became musicians, for example, Alexandre Borodine at the age of forty years created magnificent compositions, like *Prince Igor* and others. He did not want to renounce his original profession of medicine. That is why that radio program... *Who Am I? Who Am I?*

After a recording of the Ballade in d minor of Chopin, she spoke of her missing a friend who was a pianist.

[Audio Segment 18](#). A senior citizen speaks about missing a friend who was a pianist.

Transcription [in French] of Audio Segment 18.

Je réservais mes amis musiciens, parce qu'il y a une qui est une très bonne pianiste. Et voilà, c'est une très belle page de ma vie, disparu à jamais.

Translation [in English] of Audio Segment 18.

I respected my musician friends because there is one who is a very good pianist. Thus it is a very beautiful page of my life, disappeared forever.

She also displayed remarkable artistic skills at this time. Figures 2 through 33 ([Appendix](#)) were created in her ninth decade. Figure 20 has the title "Palm on the ocean" on its lower border.

[Audio Segment 19](#). A senior citizen speaks about her current mental condition on Christmas Day when she was aged 82 years, apparently December 25, 1987.

Transcription [in English] of Audio Segment 19.

Today is Christmas Day. And very sad looking outside. Instead of snow like it used to be in the normal countries. Even in Russia right now it's full of snow in Moscow. I heard that on the radio. But here it's dark and humid and mal temperature. Anyhow very ill *scène* [scene], ill *scène* [scene], I mean unhealthy. Like always. And this is the, I think in the United States the climate is not very good all over. So, in New York, don't talk about this awful.

So Christmas Day, it's already past. And I am alone as always, but I am not complain[ing] because I have to be alone *excepté* [except] who are very seldom, they disappeared little by little, death, sick. Anyhow, the real are never, never *nombreux* [numerous]. So, I am with my books, with my music, if something interesting, oh, yes, tonight it will be Ballet Kirov, Kirov Ballet, from Petrograd. I don't know who is dancing, I hope [a woman's name]. I seldom saw her. But, otherwise, I don't know if there's something, it's interesting.

[Audio Segment 23](#). A senior citizen comments that she expects nothing in life anymore. She laments her current "poor life" in contrast to her exciting past. She states that she can go without regrets.

Transcription of Audio Segment 23.

So, what can I expect? Nothing anymore. And, believe me, I would go without any regrets. What regrets could I have? Having such a poor life comparing [sic] to my past beautiful, and very exciting life. As French [sic] says, "*On ne peut pas être et avoir été* [One cannot be and have been]." That's very, very true.

## Informal Clinical Observation

Since there is no evidence that the subject ever had a known psychiatric examination, she can be assigned a likely psychiatric diagnosis on the basis of the overwhelming evidence of the data acquired over the course of two decades as neighbor and the material provided in this article. Although the author never conducted a mental status examination on the subject, he recollects that she exhibited nearly every day for periods of two weeks or more, depressed mood most of the day, markedly dimin-

ished interest or pleasure in almost all activities most of the day, fatigue and loss of energy, and diminished ability to think and concentrate. She also told the author the combination to her suitcase which contained a "way out." After her death, he opened it to find many bottles of diazepam and chlordiazepoxide. Thus, she had made a plan to commit suicide by benzodiazepine overdose. Also she describes in Audio Segment 16 above an incident of taking alcohol and pills which may have been a suicide attempt. Ostensibly the full criteria for a major depressive episode appear likely to be met by retrospective application to the available data (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). She appeared to manifest a major depression for most of the two decades of her acquaintance with the author. Additionally, she manifested episodes lasting several days of increased activity, complaints of "nervousness," rapid speech, getting up late at night to clean, intermittently. Thus, there exists ample evidence in this article to suggest the diagnosis of bipolar II disorder.

Data is given to document that the subject had depressed mood for much of the ultimate two and a half decades of her life. Also she demonstrated diminished interest or pleasure, insomnia, hypersomnia, psychomotor retardation, fatigue, and loss of energy for at least some of that period of 25 or so years. For example, Audio Segments 2, 3, 13, and 14 demonstrate marked latencies of speech. She appears to cry during Audio Segments 2, 13, and 14. While it is not known if at least five of these symptoms were present nearly every day for a period of at least two weeks, that seems likely. While the subject did express grief about the loss of friends, the symptoms of depression seem to have been pervasive for most two and a half decades. Therefore, bereavement for recently deceased friends is an inadequate explanation. There is also evidence that the subject likely had hypomanic episodes. For example in Audio Segment 16, she reports feeling good enough to take work, a remarkable feat for a woman in her eighth decade. That segment reveals an elevated, expansive mood with inflated self-esteem. Also she speaks rapidly in Audio Segments 1, 16, and 17, illustrating that she is more talkative than usual. An increase in goal-directed activities in her last three decades is documented by the body of creative works left by the subject including a journal, eleven audiotapes of dictated memoirs, a biography of Peter the Great apparently translated from Russian to English, many drawings (See the [Appendix](#)), notes, and letters. Thus, there exists evidence to document her likely hypomanic episodes. On the other hand, it is unknown if the symptoms of mania occurred at the same time and lasted at least 4 days. Thus, the diagnosis of hypomanic episodes is likely appropriate for this subject. For this reason, the diagnosis of likely bipolar II disorder is established by the likely presence of recurrent depressive episodes and the hypomanic episodes (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Additionally data is presented to document a pervasive pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking beginning in early adulthood. Inappropriately sexually seductive or provocative behavior is suggested by her multiple sexual relationships including at least one relationship with a married man. Evidence is further provided in Audio Segments 1 and

2 of rapidly shifting and shallow expressions of emotions. Although absent from this article, notations in her journal suggest that she consistently used her physical appearance to draw attention to herself. The desire to draw attention to herself on the basis of her physical appearance is substantiated by photographs of herself in bathing suits towards the end of her sixth decade. Speech that is excessively impressionistic and lacking in detail is documented in Audio Segments 1 and 5. Self-dramatization, theatricality, and exaggerated expressions of emotion characterize most of the incidents recorded in this article and in the source materials as a whole. Therefore, there exists ample evidence that she likely met diagnostic criteria for histrionic personality disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Utilizing all available information reported in this article, the author proposes the following record of the mental disorders of the subject employing the multiaxial approach of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR™)*(American Psychiatric Association, 2000)(Table 1).

**Table 1. Diagnoses Resulting from a DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000)**

	Multiaxial Evaluation
Axis I	296.89 Bipolar II Disorder, Depressed, Severe Without Psychotic Features, Likely
Axis II	301.50 Histrionic Personality Disorder, Likely
Axis III	Degenerative joint disease by history Status post bilateral cataract extractions Retinal detachment, left eye, secondary to cataract extraction Hard of hearing, both ears, severe
Axis IV	Deaths of friends
Axis V	GAF = 26 (highest level last year)

## Discussion

This article presents a case report of sadness, loss, and creativity in a senior citizen based on the audiotapes that she dictated about her life, her photographs, her drawings, her writings, and letters written to her, as well as the personal recollections of her neighbor, the author, without utilization of extant medical, psychiatric, and other health records. Depression is a common symptom in senior citizens. Segments of audiotapes are presented to document the subject's sadness to lose her wealth, her beauty, her hearing, her vision, her friends, and other valuable objects. Her interest in creativity is documented by her frequent references to the works of composers and musicians, poets, and visual artists. She also mourns the deaths of several creative artists. The creativity of the subject is documented by the memoirs she produced as oral and written recollections and the drawings that she produced during her final decades. These apparently were

created at the same time that she bitterly complained of depression and possibly during episodes of hypomania.

There remain several questions about this case. First, the data are those selected by the subject. One can question the veracity of the events described in this report. Experience in the practice of psychiatry suggests that if a statement is hard to believe, then it is probably false. However, there appears to be internal consistency in the data supported by photographs, letters from others, official documents, as well as the writings, audiotapes, and drawings of the subject. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the subject attempted to portray herself in a higher status in several photographs apparently from the 1960s. During these years she worked as maid for some celebrities, a status documented by letters and income tax returns. On the other hand, there are photographs of the subject in her own clothes, not in her uniform, alone at the estates of her employers implying that she is the lady of the house. The photographs may have been taken without the permission of the true owners of the mansions. These photographs suggest that she sought to portray herself as a wealthy woman, not a domestic servant of a wealthy woman. Such behavior suggests a deliberate attempt to deceive. Perhaps, she desired to return to her previous higher status. On the other hand, an attempt to deceive may pervade all the material. There may be deliberate omissions of information to falsely present herself as a person of high status. Although the documents on which this report is based appear ostensibly consistent, a precise correlation of all available sources of information has not been attempted. Additionally several of the segments are reminiscent of short stories and other works of W. Somerset Maugham, books read by the subject during her last years. Furthermore, there has been no confirmation of the data suggested by the material of the subject through the use of collateral sources. Therefore, paradoxes remain to be resolved by meticulous examination of source documents by experts fluent in English, French, and Russian.

Another limitation of this report is the absence of review of medical records. The author lacks the access to the medical and other health records of the subject. Therefore, possibly crucial health data is lacking. On the other hand, the author was a close friend of the subject, so he was familiar with her medical complaints. Also, the author knew well the social workers, nurses, and home health aides of the subject. Therefore, he had a fair general knowledge of her health. He accurately represents her health concerns in this document. However, this is a selected, representative presentation of her health status. It is not a comprehensive medical history. Other sources are required to obtain a full medical and psychiatric history. Specifically her mental status is assessed on the basis of what she recorded without a diagnostic psychiatric interview (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

There are several additional limitations to this report. This report is not a complete documentation of every stage of her life. Additionally the profound influences of international events in Europe, Asia, and North America, including both World Wars, are not developed in this report. While eleven audiocassettes and many written recollections remain of the memoirs of the subject, only brief portions were included in

this report. Other scholars who examine the full set of recorded and other items may develop different interpretations. Precise translations of lengthy sections, mainly in French, are not included in this report. Additionally none of the documents in Russian was utilized for this report. Scholars who can read both French and Russian will be better able to assess overall this collection of documents. Linguists will likely provide different interpretations. The goal of the segments presented in this paper is to provide the gist of the ideas suggested by the subject. This article attempts to duplicate the experience of a psychiatrist seeing a patient in an office. A psychiatric interview requires the utilization of clinical and linguistic skills simultaneously. This is comparable to the approach utilized by a clinical psychiatrist. The crucial part of the interview with the patient is to understand the main points. Fine nuances of the meaning of individual words are less relevant to the practice of psychiatry. A psychiatrist must not lose sight of the forest while viewing the trees.

The reliability and validity of the technique of assessing the mental status of a person by examination of the extant verbal and written documents, drawings, and other items of the subject without medical and psychiatric records needs to be assessed by psychometric research (Brasic and Young, 1994). The value of this approach must be confirmed by other researchers in different locations with different subjects. Also, the results of this article need to be compared to those of historians who examine the full collection of materials including complete translations of all materials from French and Russian. Much research remains to be accomplished with the creative efforts left by the subject.

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