

VARIATIONS^{2e}

Not all great minds think alike



The collage features several newspaper classifieds. A red circle highlights a 'CAREERS' section with the following text:

CAREERS

GENERAL HELP WANTED
Seeking someone for general help, eg. filing, organizing, errands, answering emails. Must know how to type.
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Ready to Boost Your Company's Productivity?

Create a 2e-Friendly Workplace!

- Value each individual
- Respect different perspectives
- Recognize the value of cognitive diversity
 - Offer work-environment options
- Provide flexible approaches for completing tasks

Below the circle, another 'WEEKEND RECEPTION' ad is visible: 'We are seeking a general office assistant for Sunday afternoons between the hours of 11:30am to 5:00pm. \$12/H'.

To the right, a 'CLASSIFIED' section lists various jobs: 'WEEKEND RECEPTION', 'GENERAL MANAGER', 'P/T Sales assistant', 'SENIOR ADVISOR ASSISTANT', 'RECEPTIONIST WANTED', 'NEED A SMALL LOAN', 'BOOKKEEPING SERVICES', and 'COMMERCIAL LOANS'.

CONTENTS

02

Letter from the Editor

04

We Are Our Work

The importance of professional fulfillment for neurodiverse workers

06

The Rise of the Neurodiverse Workplace

Companies embrace another kind of diversity

12

A Star-Shaped Peg in a Circle and Square World

Getting in where you fit in

16

Was the American Spirit Actually ADHD?

Restlessness or restless spirit

20

In Good Company

EvoLibri is preparing neurodiverse youth for the working world

22

Creating the Perfect Fit

Turning ADD into an asset

26

Finding Neurodiversity in Hollywood

David Shore's iconic characters explore neurodiversity in the workplace

30

Fostering a Positive Work Environment

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a blueprint

32

Bagatelles

Just a little amusement

38

The Right IDEA

How to use the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to best serve 2e students

48

Exceptional Educators for Twice-Exceptional Students

How one 2e school finds terrific teachers

50

Neuroscience of Asynchronous Development in the Bright Mind

Discovering the brain behind gifted and 2e behaviors

52

Smart Books for Smart Kids

Wishtree

VARIATIONS^{2e}

PUBLISHER

Carl Sabatino

MANAGING EDITOR

Chris Wiebe

HEAD OF CONTENT OPERATIONS

Jon Baum

ART DIRECTOR

Heather Lembcke

EDITOR

Stuart Matranga

CONSULTANTS

Patti Mangan

Robin Schader

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Garrett Peabody

memberships@2news.com

www.2news.com

(818) 506-1091

2e NEWS ADVISORY BOARD

Susan Assouline

Susan Baum

Paul Beljan

Kim Busi

Kathi Kearney

Deirdre Lovecky

Marlo Payne Thurman

Dan Peters

Julia Roberts

Ellen Rosen

Linda Silverman

Meredith Warshaw

Variations^{2e} - Not all great minds think alike is owned and published by Bridges 2e Media.

Publication and content copyright
Bridges 2e Media 2019 ©. All rights reserved.



Was the American Spirit Actually ADHD?

RESTLESSNESS OR RESTLESS SPIRIT

by Tom Ropelewski

AT AN EARLY AGE, MY SON showed evidence of twice-exceptional behavior—just like his great grandparents.

Of course, I took some pride when our son was reading at 18 months and memorizing factoids about every single creature at the aquarium in Golden Gate Park. His ability to focus for hours on building Lego structures or cardboard fortresses seemed like a blessing; he didn't need to be constantly entertained. And while he didn't seem

to crave friends, he wasn't unfriendly. Sometimes it felt as if his rich inner life was all he really needed.

He clearly was more brilliant and precocious than I was at that age, but the apple usually doesn't fall far, does it? Even when he walked out of his first-grade class, telling his teacher that he'd come back as soon as they were teaching something he didn't already know ... well, I would never have done anything like that when I was six, but I had to admire both his logic and chutzpah. He saw his choice as a

“win-win” for his teacher and himself, although the administration begged to differ.

But when it became clear that he was struggling with some of the school basics — like following instructions or transitioning between subjects — I had a hard time relating. Why was his homework taking so long? Why was the “easy stuff” frustrating him? Everybody finds some things about school boring, but why couldn't he just suck it up and push through like most of us do?

It took a few school changes (including a revelatory year spent in Rome) and a good deal of research for my wife and me to realize that, no, we weren't raising a 40-year-old *Jeopardy* contestant trapped in an eight-year-old body. Our son has ADHD. He is twice-exceptional. His brain is wired differently.

Which brings me to my wife Leslie and her side of the family. She comes from a long line of maverick artists, and I'm convinced that stubborn eccentricity came with her DNA.

A few years ago I made my first documentary, *Child of Giants: My Journey with Maynard Dixon and Dorothea Lange*. It focused on my father-in-law, Dan Dixon, his younger brother John, and their challenging relationships growing up as the children of those two artistic icons: Maynard Dixon, with his illustrations of America's western pioneers and landscapes; and Dorothea Lange, with her stark photos documenting Depression-era workers and farmers. In the course of my research, I wondered whether what we have celebrated as "that restless American pioneer spirit" might today be diagnosed as ADHD.

There's a certain wanderlust and willfulness that appears throughout the Dixon family tree. John Dixon arrived from England in 1745 and settled in Williamsburg, Virginia, where he was an early publisher of the *Virginia Gazette*. He printed the Declaration of Independence — on Page 2. John's great-grandson, Harry St. John Dixon, was a Confederate Army officer who moved west after the Civil War; in California's San Joaquin Valley, he joined "the Alabama Colony," which, according to family lore, had hopes of starting a new Confederacy.

Maynard

Maynard Dixon, Harry's first son and Leslie's grandfather, was by all accounts "a sickly child." Why do the stories of so many artists, from Proust to Scorsese

to Eminem, begin that way? By the age of six, Maynard was teaching himself how to draw, sketching images from books and magazines. His favorites were trains and horses and characters from the Old West (which wasn't very old at that point). At 14 he sent his portfolio to Frederick Remington, perhaps the most famous illustrator of his day, in the hopes of finding a mentor. Remington was complimentary and encouraged him not to listen to anyone as he developed his artistic voice. This was just the advice Maynard needed. He hated formal schooling, and promptly quit to pursue his artistic dreams on his own, until he was accepted into the California School of Design in San Francisco in 1893.

No, we weren't raising a 40-year-old *Jeopardy* contestant trapped in an eight-year-old body. Our son has ADHD. He is twice-exceptional. His brain is wired differently.

There, Maynard developed not only his voice as an artist but a distinctive sartorial style — eccentric, vividly American, more riverboat gambler than starving artiste. Like Remington, Maynard pursued a career in fine art as well as commercial illustration, and created memorable covers for *Sunset* magazine, including the first issue after the Great Earthquake of 1906. He rented studio space in North Beach and became an enthusiastic member of the bohemian community. (Talented artists do seem to find their "tribe," don't they? One of the subjects in my documentary, *2e: Twice Exceptional*, an artist named Sydney who attended CalArts after graduating from Bridges Academy, told me that her twice-exceptional qualities didn't stand out at college because "everybody there is quirky.")

Although by all accounts Maynard was a popular and charismatic figure in the San Francisco art world, he liked nothing better than to disappear for months at a time into the deserts of the Southwest to sketch and paint. (The preference for solitary activity — another check off the 2e list.) He never drifted far from the themes that inspired and fascinated him from his childhood, as he focused on the people, often Native American, and landscapes of the region. But within those limitations, oh what stylistic variety! There are works that suggest everything from impressionism to Cubism. (Mastery of a single subject from all conceivable angles — another check.)

Dorothea

Leslie's grandmother was Dorothea Lange, one of the preeminent photographers of the 20th century, who created some of the most breathtaking and heartbreaking images of the Depression era. *Migrant Mother* (1936), depicting the fretful visage of a desperate mother huddled with her children in a barren pea-patch, is, according to the Library of Congress, the most reproduced American photograph in their collection. It was made into a stamp by the U.S. Postal Service in 1998.

Most of the Dixon grandchildren have warm memories of their grandmother — and of summers spent at the beach at Steep Ravine on the Northern California coast. Leslie's cousin Dyanna

Taylor recalls a time when Dorothea picked up a small creature from the sand and asked Dyanna, “What do you see?” Dyanna responded with a simple answer, but Dorothea pushed further. “No. What do you see?” She was encouraging the young girl to look closer, to grasp all the details as well as the essence. In other words, to hyperfocus — a concept familiar, for better or worse, to many parents of 2e kids. Dyanna is now a successful cinematographer and documentarian.

It’s one thing to be the grandchild of an artist. Children of artists have an even more difficult time of it. They are born under long shadows, usually of “the great man” — think Picasso or

Brando. But what if both parents are artists? What if both found the urge to follow their muses stronger than that of family?

During the depths of the Depression, Maynard continued his painting excursions into desert, securing his reputation as one of the prominent artistic interpreters of the region. Dorothea teamed with UC-Berkeley economist Paul Taylor to chronicle the plight of Mexican and Dust Bowl migrants in Central California. Their two sons, Dan and John, seven and four years old, respectively, at the time, were “farmed out” to what were essentially foster care situations, off and on, for about seven years.

Those Who Followed

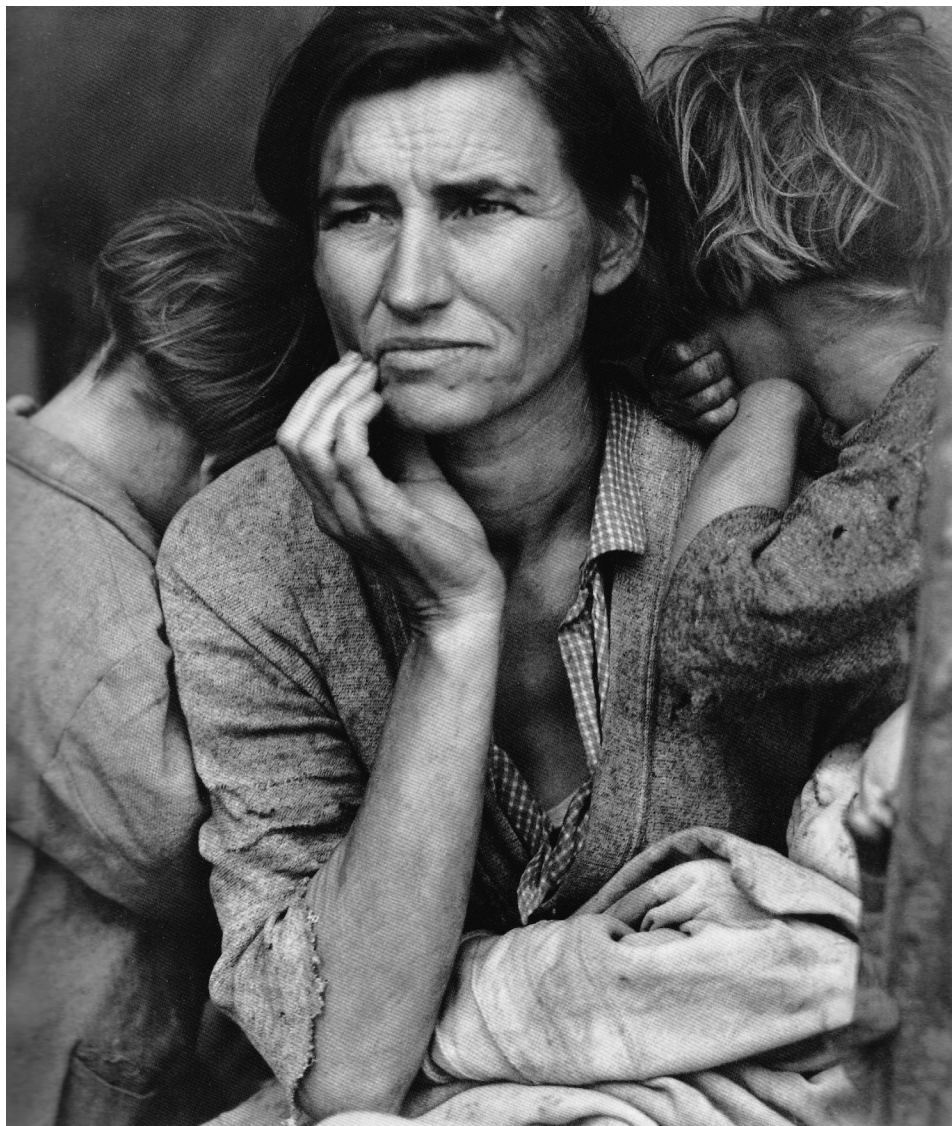
When Dorothea finally settled back in Berkeley — she had divorced Dixon and married Taylor in 1935 — young John did his best to forgive the wounds, but the same wasn’t true for Dan. He grew enraged and confrontational. He stole several of his mother’s cameras and hocked them. Like his father, he had never been much of a student and stopped going to school — and eventually stopped coming home. Dan built himself a makeshift shelter on a rooftop in Downtown Oakland, and spent much of his time in the public library. He had always been an avid reader and it provided good cover as he kept warm. He began to develop the instincts of a writer, which proved to be his salvation.

Finally, Dan developed an illness severe enough to lead him meekly back to Dorothea’s doorstep, and she took him in. While he was recovering, he asked if she would allow him to write a piece about her and her work. He had the idea that he might be able to sell it to one of the popular photography magazines of the day. He succeeded. This led to more writing work, and eventually to a successful career as a creative director in advertising at Doyle Dane Bernbach.

In the early 1960s, Dan Dixon was Don Draper; in fact, he was one of the brains behind the fanciful VW Bug campaign that has a cameo in an episode of *Mad Men*. He grew to become Dorothea’s most trusted confidant, writing text for her pictures and offering consultation on a major exhibit of her work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

My wife Leslie is Dan’s only daughter, and for many years they had a tenuous relationship. Like Don Draper, Dan divorced his first wife (Leslie’s mother) and married his secretary. He then took an advertising job in the Philippines. Leslie and her mom moved back to San Francisco where they lived modestly — “on the wrong side of Laurel Village,” Leslie likes to say. True

Migrant Mother, 1936



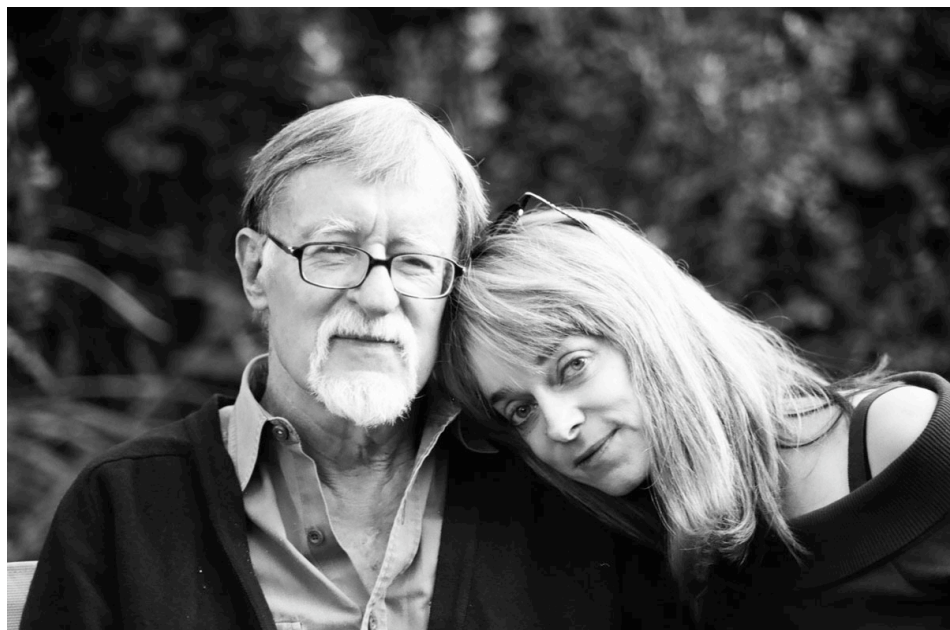
to Dixon tradition, Leslie didn't go to college, either. When I met her, she was teaching word processing at a company in Downtown L.A. (this was the '80s). We were set up on a blind date by an ex-girlfriend of mine, who intrigued me by saying, "You've got to meet Leslie. She reads books." In fact, she had just finished writing her first screenplay and was hoping to find an agent.

Since then she's written some 15 feature films, including *Mrs. Doubtfire*, *Hairspray*, and *Limitless*. And while I don't think she's 2e, she certainly is exceptional, and has the sharpest mind for navigating the film business of anyone I've ever met. (Get her to tell you her Harvey Weinstein story sometime.)

We both see a lot of Dan Dixon in his grandson, our son. The stubbornness, the autodidacticism, the determination to speak his mind no matter the cost. Also the creativity, wit and resourcefulness. He looks young for his age, as did Dan. When Dan passed away at 84, the man barely looked 60.

She was encouraging the young girl to look closer, to grasp all the details as well as the essence. In other words, to hyperfocus — a concept familiar, for better or worse, to many parents of 2e kids.

Leslie and I have tried our best to educate ourselves about raising a twice-exceptional child, which isn't to say it's been easy. Forewarned isn't always forearmed in navigating the 2e journey. I look back at Dan's troubled teenaged relationship with Dorothea, and I sometimes feel just a little sympathetic toward her, and the emotional toll those battles must have taken. I'd like to think there was more love in her for Dan than he felt at the time.



Dan & Leslie Dixon

Our son's a senior in college now. He started out as a biology major but switched to political science after the 2016 election. He says he wants to pursue a career in politics. One of his hopes is to help prepare the nation for

routes; he's way too germophobic for the latter, anyway.

But we won't be surprised if his journey, in grand 2e style, continues to take unexpected turns before he finds what he's looking for. And that seems to be a family tradition.

the political fallout that could happen when artificial intelligence reaches singularity and really devastates the American middle class.

Maybe he'll do that. Or maybe he'll take another detour. The Dixons tend to spend a period of time in the wilderness. Maynard did it literally. Dan chose to — needed to? — live ferally on the streets of Oakland for a while. I don't see my son taking either of those

Tom Ropelewski is a filmmaker who resides in Berkeley, CA. He serves on the Board of Trustees of Bridges Academy. His documentaries 2e: Twice Exceptional and 2e2: Teaching the Twice Exceptional have screened around the world. For more information, visit www.2emovie.com. Information about Child of Giants: My Journey with Maynard Dixon and Dorothea Lange can be found at www.childofgiants.com.