

Mother helps

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That did the trick.
The doctor didn't share a diagno-

sis with Maureen or her husband. "He said therapy was the prescribed treatment and did not decide to use drugs," she said. "I was really naïve about mental illness." Still, she was intelligent enough

to wonder if there may have been something in her background which triggered Paul's mental state.

"I looked at our family history and didn't find any evidence of mental illness," she said.

Meanwhile, Paul's schoolwork and portfolio impressed a number of schools. His list of acceptance letters was enviable: Pratt, Columbia and Cooper Union.

He decided on the third, which in the end probably was a good choice because he commuted, allowing his parents to keep a close eye on his mental condition.

From the start, things didn't go well. Coming off an extended manic high, Paul was slipping into a deep depression and spent the greater part of his freshman year sleeping in the library.

"We salvaged his first year," his mother said.

His first real break with reality came the following summer. Maureen remembers one episode when Paul came into his father's office. He had a Mercedes Benz

shirt on but he was wearing it inside out, his mother explained. When his father pointed it out to him, he promptly stripped off the shirt in the office.

"He was wearing the Mercedes Benz logo on the inside because he believed the Mercedes Benz people were after him," she said.

As the summer months wore on Paul's paranoia grew worse. At one point he refused to let the water meter reader into the house because he believed he was an FBI agent.

It was at that point that Paul's psychiatrist recommended he be committed. For Maureen, it was like a death sentence.

"I thought my son was going there for life," she said, pointing out that there were few organizations like NAMI in those days to help families through such crises.

"I cried myself to sleep every single night ... until we had a meeting at the hospital and a Dr. said, 'Talk therapy is fine but what your son needs is medication and he will be out in about 30 days.'"

At that time Maureen and her husband first heard a definitive diagnosis. Their son had schizophrenia. Later the diagnosis was changed to bipolar and then finally it was changed to schizoaffective disorder, a combination of both.

Paul's journey since then has not been an easy one to say the least. First of all, the Navane, an anti-psychotic medication which he was administered when first hospitalized in 1980, had nasty side effects.

One of the worst side effects of these earlier anti-psychotics is tardive dyskinesia, a condition which can be permanent where the victim becomes partially paralyzed or experiences involuntary bodily movements such as thrusting of the tongue or odd jerking of the legs while walking.

Later Paul was switched to Clozaril, a more refined anti-psychotic which seems to have less side-effects.

"The tardive dyskinesia is mostly gone," his mother said.

He also experimented with drugs for a while, mostly marijuana.

"The drugs were even more difficult for me than mental illness," his mother said.

Paul's explanation was not what one would expect.

"I wasn't trying to self-medicate," he told her. "I used (drugs) so people would look at me as a pothead rather than as a crazy person."

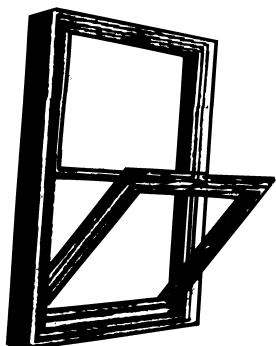
Today, at age 40, Paul is living in a day treatment program in New York City. He has been in a relationship with another woman although it has yet to develop beyond an intimate friendship.

Two years ago he returned to art school.

"I was happy but scared," Maureen said.

He has now completed five courses in his major, which is art therapy.

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