

## Reflections on My Childhood Years: From age 3 to age 10

By Tony Lai

I do not recall much of my childhood from age 3 to age 10. However, in the past four years, Professor Sharkey has gathered information on my behavior and development during my childhood from my parents and teachers. The following is an account of my childhood by Professor Sharkey.

"From two to three years of age I Tony continued writing letters and numbers daily, often in books. He could only speak a few sentences, and never tried to count. He watched a few children's TV programs, such as Mr. Dress-up, Sesame Street, and Romper Room. From 3 to 4.5 years, he developed the habit of writing on the walls all over the house.

"The mother still continued to read to Tony. However, after a few sentences he would interrupt and try to talk (or make noise) for a few minutes. He would listen and then read

a bit before the next interruption before giving up. Tony was interested in drawing traffic lights, laundry symbols, and Volvos (two-dimensional views). He would usually spend one to three months at the same topic until he was very familiar with the subject. He started to count at the age of 3.5. When he started to count for the first time, he counted 18 pieces of chocolate in a Sear's catalog in apparently random order without making a mistake.

"By 4 years of age, he could add and subtract. At 4.5 years, he started to copy calendars several times daily for several months. Eventually, he could tell people's birthdays from their birthdates in a second.

"At five years Tony's father showed him how to multiply... The father explained multiplication and then made a five by five graph and filled it in. Tony understood and immediately set up a twenty by twenty graph and filled it in. Before he went to school he could add and subtract fractions with ease. He could also read and write.

"In the fall of 1978 Tony entered grade 1. The teacher ignored his mathematical and other advanced abilities. It may have been a stressful year as Tony missed about a third of the time due to colds and upset stomachs. In grade 2 he

begun to work on a computer at home. He took the manual by himself and followed it for hours per day. He spent several hours a day on a computer from grade 2 to grade 5 and also since then. The teacher in grade 2 did notice that Tony was bright and started him on an individual programmed math course. He finished up to grade 5.5 and with another aspect up to grade 8. In grade 3 Tony wrote many poems in school and finished grade 9 math.

"He skipped grade 4 and entered grade 5 in the fall of 1981. During this year he completed math to the end of grade 12, doing the grade 12 math textbook in 2 months. He reviewed grade 12 math again in the summer. In Aug. of 1982 when he was ten years old he was taken to the local university and tested for four or five hours. He was at the 95th percentile in the School

and College Ability Math Test for college entrance students and at the grade 9.5 level of the Wide Range Vocabulary Test. He also seemed to be formally operational on some Piaget tests. As for personality he seemed to be well adjusted, pleasant, and likeable. His school teachers and the school principal also reported that he got along well with both students and teachers and the teachers liked to have him in their classes."

From the above account, it appears that before I was five, I was a dumb and peculiar boy. I rarely played with toys, seldom listened to fairy tales, only occasionally watched TV, and did not attend kindergarten. I was a compulsive drawer: I drew and wrote on sheets of paper, books, and even walls. Moreover, I had no friends to play with except my brother. As a result, I learned

to tolerate boredom and acquired a long attention span. I also became accustomed to learning and doing things on my own. This is at odds with the methods for raising kids recommended by early childhood educators.

Since I was five, I have found mathematics very easy. If one can think abstractly and creatively, mathematical subjects should not be too difficult. I master computer programming in BASIC at eight by myself, and understood grade 12 math at ten with some help from my father. Because I had a long attention span and could stand boredom I was able to sit at a desk day after day until I fully comprehended difficult topics. I wrote more than two dozen poems at school by referring to a dictionary in grade 3; one poem in particular took me four hours to finish at school.

I played violin for a few years from nine, but I did not enjoy practicing; my impatience in practicing violin did not affect my attention span in other activities. It was fortunate that my attention span was not shortened and my curiosity in mathematics was not diminished by trivial activities such as watching Saturday morning cartoons, Sesame Street, rock music videos or reading fairy tales.

I hope present and future parents may find my behavior and development during my childhood to be of some interest. In my opinion, cultivating a child's attention span, whether it be in playing musical instruments, drawing and writing, or copying the multiplication table, is one of the most important elements in early childhood education. With a short attention span, it is easy for a child to go astray.

## Concordia to Stay with Bank of Montreal

MONTREAL (CUP) — Concordia University is staying with the Bank of Montreal.

The university's social policy committee, which had been investigating the bank's links to South Africa apartheid, has unanimously recommended to the Board of Governors not to divest.

"We studied the relationship between south Africa and the Bank of Montreal," said committee chairperson Thomas Hecht. "We found that they comply in spirit and substance with all the guidelines set forth by the government of Canada."

The committee used a screening process to make their decision, using standards set down by the federal govern-

ment in its Code of Conduct for companies operating in South Africa.

Among federal measures adopted last year in opposition to apartheid was a ban on all new bank loans to South Africa, whether to public or private sectors.

The committee took about three months to set specific questions for the bank. Once this happened, according to student representative Karen Takacs, the Bank of Montreal provided written answers and the decision was made.

"The process itself was not a waste of time. It's important for universities to recognize the need for such a screening process to determine if divest-

ment is necessary," she said. "Had we been looking at this question a few years ago however, the result might have been very different."

"Apartheid existed 30 years



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## Campus Safety Questioned

To Whom It May Concern:

Once again we are prompted to bring to the attention of all members of the University community the importance of protecting their belongings. Two cases of theft have been reported to this Office in the past week and we urge all of you to take whatever measures are necessary to prevent such losses.

Never leave small objects such as jewelry or calculators

where they might prove a temptation to passers-by. Women's purses hold a particular attraction for certain thieves; please keep these in a secure place or within your sight at all times.

Remember, it only takes a few seconds for a sneak thief to grab a wallet or purse and make a getaway.

A. J. MacLeod  
Director of Security