

Book Title: The Magic Castle: A True Story Multiple Personality and One Boy's Harrowing Journey to Wdepressionness.

Author: Carole Smith

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Alex, 10 years old, came to live with Carole and Sam Smith in August of 1984. He brought with him a file that contained an overwhelming amount of information. Alex lived with his mother and stepfather until he was 5 years old. At that time, Alex was given to his biological father because his mother was an alcoholic. After reports of abuse and neglect, Alex was placed in a residential facility when he was 7 years old during the summer of 1984. At that time Alex went to a summer camp for 6 weeks and then to a foster home before going to the Smith home. When Carole went to pick Alex up for the first time, she saw him sitting on the front lawn with two large garbage bags next to him. The current foster parent loudly thanked Carole for taking Alex off her hands. She stated, "I tell you I never been so glad to see anyone go as I am this one. I kept him two weeks and it was the longest two weeks of my life!" (p. 4). This woman went on to explain everything that Alex did wrong during the time he was in her house.

Trouble began for Carole and Sam as soon as Alex arrived at their house. He was angry and withdrawn and had the tendencies of a 2-year-old boy. He was behaviorally out of control and repeatedly broke things. Carole was afraid to take him out in public for "the merchandise became war missiles, and in the supermarket the shopping cart became a destructive tank" (p.15). It wasn't long before Carole realized that Alex never went through the normal Oedipal stages because of the abuse he suffered, and she chose to nurture him and not discipline him until she felt that he could handle it. Within only 2 months of having Alex at their home, Sam and Carole realized that they needed extra help and support. The social worker at the foster care agency wasn't much help, so they eventually relied on psychiatrists and state social workers for support. Carole also found a support group to attend with other foster parents.

As Alex grew older, so did his problems. Carole continued to persevere in her caring for Alex. Alex became a permanent member of Sam and Carole's family 2 years after he entered their home as a foster child. As Alex's problems escalated, Carole began to have nagging feelings that there could be more to his troubles. When Alex was 14, a therapist suggested that he might have multiple personalities. At that time he met with a therapist who used hypnotism as a form of treatment. To Alex and Carole's surprise, Alex was able to be hypnotized. It was at this point that the other personalities began to reveal themselves. For the next 3 years, Carole and Sam's life was in constant turmoil. They never knew when another new personality would reveal itself. Whenever one did, they learned a bit more of the horror Alex experienced in his abuse as a young child. Through therapy, Alex learned to envision a magic castle when confronting the personalities. In his mind he chose a room in the castle in which he felt safe, thereby allowing him to integrate the personalities. By the end of the book eight personalities were revealed, along with

horrifying facts related to Alex's abuse. Alex's personalities were created to help him handle the stress during the recurring abuse done to him as a young child. Creating personalities during stressful times became a habit for Alex, so he kept on doing it. By age 21, he finally realized that this was counterproductive, so he learned to deal with stressful situations on his own.

Throughout the story, Carole never gave up on Alex. She continually documented each traumatic event in his life for therapy reasons. It was actually one of Alex's personalities that prompted her to write this book. In the epilogue Alex is quoted as saying, "Being a multiple was a way of survival and not a sign of insanity" (p.262). As of the writing of this book (-1998-), Alex was still living at home and working with his dad.