

my life to occupy me, without the continuing and seemingly never-ending problems of my parents and brother.

As a stringer for the *Post* in Los Angeles, I had handled some assignments in connection with the Watergate investigation—political sabotage and “dirty tricks” done against Democrats in Los Angeles, San Diego, and elsewhere, particularly those involving Donald H. Segretti (Segretti later pleaded guilty to mail fraud in connection with activities in Florida). My coup was finding an attorney friend of Segretti’s who gave us a sworn statement that Segretti had told him he had been hired for the dirty tricks campaign by Dwight Chapin, then President Nixon’s appointments secretary. (Chapin was later convicted of lying to a Federal grand jury about his knowledge of Segretti’s activities.)

I was very proud of my work, and of its description in Woodward and Bernstein’s book, *All the President’s Men*, which was published in the spring of 1974. But try as I might, I couldn’t get my parents to read it—not at publication, and not until six months had passed.

“What is it I have to do to get you to pay attention to me?” I yelled at them one night, pounding on the table. “This involves the President of the United States—would you read about me if I had investigated God?”

There were explanations, plausible, businesslike, but none of them worked: They had known all along what I was doing; they were very proud of me anyway. But the only explanation that I believed then or now is that they couldn’t handle the idea of my independence and maturity.

The Special Olympics gave my parents an additional chance to help what they were now referring to as “the cause.” Whenever the events were held in Los Angeles County, my father could volunteer to write press releases, and my mother volunteer to line up Hollywood “personalities” whose presence would guarantee the appearance of the television news cameras whose coverage was so important to convincing the public that the retarded are really not so different from other people.

Once our mother had talked to total strangers about her

plans to start a residential facility for the retarded. Now she began talking to the cameramen, the news producers, the secretaries, and the hangers-on she met in the Los Angeles TV business about what a great idea it would be to produce a documentary about mental retardation. She wanted to show people that it really wasn't a crime to have a retarded person in the family, and if they liked she could send them some material she had accumulated on the subject, or would they like to meet her son, Roger, who wrote poetry?

"The gambit worked," she said. "A producer became interested, and she made a documentary about the retarded, focusing in on Roger, and the facility where he and Virginia lived."

The program borrowed its title from one of Roger's poems, called "Standing Strong," which Roger recited on camera. (Roger still didn't get a publisher for his poems, something she could not understand.)

That TV show, which was later nominated for a local Emmy award, was filmed in part at the regional finals of the 1973 Special Olympics in Los Angeles. Showing the cheerfully brazen attitude which she had developed, our mother not only had Roger in the documentary, but got him placed in a lead car as it circled the UCLA cinder track at Drake Stadium. Inside the car, as the Grand Marshal for the events, was TV star David Cassidy—who'd been a student at the junior high school where other students had tormented and harassed Roger.

There were photos aplenty, and because David Cassidy was in the picture, Roger's picture was published in several teenybopper fan magazines, along with the poem he wrote Cassidy on his birthday.

Along with David Cassidy came his mother, actress Shirley Jones.

Somehow, Shirley Jones ended up presenting an "award" to Roger for his work "on behalf of the retarded." The award was presented at a fancy black-tie ball at the Beverly Hills Hotel. At the same annual ball put on by the group of older, wealthy CAMEO people who raised money for the facility where Roger and Virginia lived, astronaut Edwin Mitchell, "the sixth man on