

**Behind the Mirror. The Story of a Pioneer in Autism Treatment and Her Work with Children on the Spectrum**  
*by Jeanne Simons*

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This inspirational book is part autobiography/ part biography of Jeanne Simons, (1910-2005), a pioneer in autism treatment who had autism herself. She worked alongside such pioneers as Leo Kanner. For a relatively short book, up to the epilogue, this has taken me, a paediatric practitioner, a long time to read, as I have frequently found myself deeply reflecting on her words.

This book will be of interest to any health care educational professional, who is interested in autistic spectrum disorder, parents of autistic children as well as individuals who are themselves autistic. Autistic spectrum disorder is a fascinating and very much still evolving condition, affecting up to 3% of the population, about which a very great deal is misunderstood or unknown.

Born in Holland, at an early age, Jeanne recognised that she was different from other children and also knew that the care of children was her vocation in life. Her story, as she came to realise her professional dream, ultimately setting up the Linwood Centre in the United States for extremely challenging children with minimal budget, is most moving. The Linwood developed a worldwide reputation and remains highly regarded. She never turned any such child away.

I found the chapter 'Who am I – the search for self', about her growing understanding over decades of living with her autism very interesting indeed and most insightful. How can a reviewer comment when one reads; 'I do not know what it feels like to love my parents'?

This is a book that richly rewards those who read it. There are many words of wisdom and powerful vignettes. The commentary by Sabine Oishi, who took down Jeanne's own words and who had known her for decades, really adds insights not only into Jeanne's own autism but also within the context of how autism is currently understood. One example is Jeanne's failure to progress in psychoanalysis, being possibly abused by her first analyst, until, finding another who, understanding her difficulties, worked successfully with her for 2 decades.

At the end of the book, I was not only deeply awed and inspired but truly sad that I never had the opportunity to meet this lady, who through her words becomes very much alive.

**Andrew N Williams**  
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