The meaning of creativity is explored. Three nationwide samples of architects, differing in levels of creativeness, are described in terms of assessment findings and revealed life history correlates of creativity. The implications of the research findings for the nurturing of creative potential are discussed. [The Science Citation Index® (SCI®) and the Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicate that this paper has been cited over 195 times since 1962.]

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"It was from Henry A. Murray at the Harvard Psychological Clinic that I first experienced the excitement of studying persons and their lives. And it was again with Murray on the assessment staff of the Office of Strategic Services during World War II that I became fascinated by the problem of what in the person and what in the life history makes an individual become a highly effective person. The question was stirred by finding again and again that candidates of the most extraordinary effectiveness had had in childhood and adolescence the kinds of frustrations, deprivations, and traumatic experiences that would have led us in the light of the then accepted theory of personality to predict that they would have become crippled personalities.

"I had the privilege of directing the institute for 21 years (1949-1970) in its studies of highly effective persons in a variety of fields — writers, architects, research scientists, mathematicians, et al. "The research reported in this paper, like all of my best research, had been done as a member of a collective, the other members of which in our creativity studies were Frank Barron, Kenneth H. Craik, Richard S. Crutchfield, Harrison G. Cough, Wallace B. Hall, and Ravenna M. Mathews.

"The kind of research that is described in the paper requires a home-like building in which staff and assessers live together during assessments that run for several days. We were fortunate to have as our institute a fraternity house remodeled to meet the needs of an assessment center. Bringing highly creative persons to our institute for study from all over the US was an expensive operation made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

"I believe there are several reasons why the paper has been so highly cited. It was written in English, not psychological jargon. It reports on a topic of wide interest, creativity, appealing to laypersons as well as to scientists in many fields. It was given prominence as one of the series of Walter Van Dyke Bingham lectures on 'the discovery of the talented' sponsored by the American Psychological Association. It has been frequently reprinted in 'collections' of papers and in 'readings' for students. Recent papers in this field have been published by myself and F. Barron and D.M. Harrington."