(1) Throughout my junior and senior year in high school, I did housework to make extra spending money. I worked for two elderly ladies who each lived alone in the same apartment complex. They were both slightly disabled by the maladies of old age, and having to do housework tired them. Although it was not always fun, I got to know them quite well, partly because I knew every corner of their homes, which strongly reflected their personalities. Before I began working for them, I had never known any older people besides my grandparents. I assumed that their interests and attitudes would be somewhat the same. Comparing the personalities of these two women, however, I saw interesting contrasts. I discovered that their attitudes and interests, developed throughout their lives, determined their fulfillment in their present lives.

(2) On Mondays I cleaned the apartment of Miss Hauser. She was a stooped, frail lady in her late seventies with thin, white hair that she had set once a week. She walked with a walker and I always felt clumsy around her, afraid I would knock her over. On Thursdays I cleaned for Miss Winter, who was also in her late seventies, but was less frail than Miss Hauser. Miss Winter stood at least 5'10" tall and walked with a cane. Although she had a weak heart all her life, she had an aura of strength about her. Both women lived alone and had never been married. "My sister stole my beau," Miss Hauser had told me one day with a cloudy look in her eyes. "He became my brother-in-law and I never found another." Miss Winter, on the other hand, was a little more mysterious. I had heard a rumor that she was in love with her first psychologist, a man whose picture hung on her bedroom wall and who had died many years ago. I never knew for sure and did not have the nerve to ask her.

(3) It surprised me at first that the two women's apartments were so different. Miss Hauser's apartment was the epitome of cleanliness and order. In the living room, tracks from the vacuum could always be seen on the bright green carpet since she hardly ever walked on it. Pastel pink walls met the carpet at the baseboard which she always insisted I dust. Plastic covered her off white Victorian style couch and chairs. On a table at one end of the couch was a collection of ornate little glass and porcelain bells. Her apartment had a proper and unlived in look that made me feel uncomfortable. Her living room reminded me of a parlor where she might have tea with acquaintances, or people she only knew.
superficially.

(4) Miss Hauser's fussiness and attention to detail in her apartment was a reflection of her personality. Before she retired, she had been a bookkeeper for a small legal firm. I could easily picture her at a desk filling out spreadsheets with hundreds of little numbers. She would have loved the preciseness of today's computerized world. Unfortunately, her past employment did little to occupy her later life, and it did not develop into any current interests. I got the impression that she was just waiting to die.

(5) Miss Winter's apartment was as different from Miss Hauser's as I could imagine. Paintings and knickknacks that she had brought back from trips to Europe and the Orient gave the place a cluttered, but interesting, look. She was not concerned so much with cleaning as she was with organizing all the stuff she had collected over the years. We were continually going through boxes of old school papers, clothes and books trying to throw some away, or at least label the box so that she would know what it was the next time she came across it in the back of a closet. She did not dwell on the past, but she had obviously had a full life.

(6) Miss Winter's personality could also have been described as unorganized in an interesting sort of way. She was never one for detail; I even filled out her catalog orders for her because she hated numbers. Before she retired, she was a professor of art and art history. "Studying art makes one worry less that everything should match or be in a set," she told me once. "It made me appreciate diversity." Her background in education gave her many current interests. She was always interested in studying a new topic, and could never know enough. Her interests had developed into personal resources which she could fall back on. Unfortunately, Miss Hauser had not developed these resources.

(7) Miss Hauser's life was centered around two things: providing for her daily needs, and the past. On her mantle were faded pictures of family members: her mother, father, perhaps her sisters or friends. I was not sure which of them were still alive, if any. In her stories her use of verb tense gave me no hint; she even spoke of her parents in the present tense, as if they were still alive. I found her stories interesting, but they also made me sad, because she had no interest in the future. When I realized this, I understood why cleanliness and order were so important to her; she did not have much else to concern herself with.

(8) Miss Winter spent at least half her day reading; I never knew anyone who was so well read. She had a huge collection of books which we tried to keep organized in her various bookcases: literature, philosophy, and history in the living room, psychology in the hall, religion in the bedroom, and art, science, and
miscellaneous in the dining room. She centered her life around a continuing interest in life and its many secrets and fascinations.

(9) Just before I left for college, Miss Hauser fell in her kitchen and had to go into a nursing home. Miss Winter hired a friend of mine to replace me after I left. I miss both women and feel fortunate to have met them and worked for them. Seeing their lives made me realize the importance of developing interests to carry me through my later life. It also made me see that everyone must have a purpose, or focus, in life.