

VOLUME 3:

# Phoenix:

1972-81

London, U.K.; Montreal; White Rock, B.C.



The phoenix is a mythical bird that lives for 500 years, builds its own funeral pyre, is consumed by the flames, then rises anew from the ashes. This legend supposedly symbolizes the rising and setting of the sun, as well as immortality, resurrection, and life after death. Like all good myths, it has a number of versions and many layers of interpretation. It appears in ancient Egyptian, Greek, Arabic, and Chinese mythology. Haida Indians, of the West Coast of Canada, have their version of the phoenix: the thunderbird, who is believed to be a powerful spirit in the form of a bird. Through its work, the earth is watered and vegetation grows, for lightning is believed to flash from its beak, and the beating of its wings is thought to result in the rolling of thunder.

If times have been hard, then more than ever, we need the purifying fire of renewal. Many people fear this process: they resist change, or they want to preserve the appearance of order and harmony at all costs, or they are threatened by disagreements of any sort. But chaos theory teaches us that the greater the chaos, the greater the resulting higher order.

The greatest learning and creativity take place on the edge of chaos.



# I.

Moses was at the airport to meet me. I had been led to the Promised Land by Carlos, my sister's ex boyfriend. As I came through the swing doors from Customs and Immigration, I could see him standing beside my sister behind the rails. As usual, my first impression of Carlos was his height. He was at least a couple of inches shorter than my sister.

They both greeted me warmly. As we sped back to downtown Montreal in Joy's Kharmann Ghia Volkswagon, I passed around the duty free cigarettes and the conversation flowed freely.

Although Joy and Carlos had officially broken up, it was clear that there was still an intimate bond between them. The last man I had seen my sister with was her ex-husband Jim. They had taken me out to a restaurant while on a visit to London. On that occasion Joy had been cool, almost offhand, with Jim. But now, in the warm sunlight of a spring day, she was light-hearted and there didn't appear to be any tension between her and Carlos.

"I've prepared some food so let's go and eat before we do anything else," said my sister, as we turned off Sherbrooke Street onto University.

I was tired and jet-lagged but almost floating with a lightness of being and bubbling enthusiasm.

"It feels so good to be back in Montreal," I blurted out. "I've got such good memories from Expo '67." I had worked at the British Pavilion at the world's fair as a guide and it had been an exciting and eventful summer. Whereas my memories of my time in Ontario (in Kingston and Toronto) were depressing, my associations with Montreal and Quebec were all positive.

"Do you speak French?" I asked Carlos, as Joy parked the car outside her apartment building on Milton.

"No. I no speak hardly a fucking word. That's where you can be of so much help to me ... you know, with communication in both French and English."

Upstairs, in Joy's one-bedroom apartment, we continued our conversation over tasty treats of salami, camembert, big juicy olives, and lots of red wine.

In London, Carlos and I had agreed to share a place together. I had also agreed to help him with his mural projects.

"Do you have anything lined up?" I inquired.

"No, not really. I just finish a small one near here in the ghetto." He was referring to the McGill University residential area, commonly known as 'the ghetto'.

"But now, with you here, we look for big walls. I'm ready to do a big, super-fucking one."

I smiled as I recalled from our times in London Carlos's fondness for the expression 'super-fucking'.

"But how, or where are we going to find a big wall that we can do?"

"Ian, my friend, we gonna go hunting for them, starting tomorrow ... or even today. I already have one or two in mind. I tell you about them soon."

"Well the first priority is to find a place to stay." Joy refilled out wine glasses and lit a cigarette.

"Is O.K. Joy ... we finish this drink and we go. We find a place today." Carlos looked at me for confirmation and I nodded. "I have a plan. We walk east along Sherbrooke and look for a place. You know it get cheaper the further east we go."

An hour later, Carlos and I set off along the wide thoroughfare of Sherbrooke Street, across Boulevard St. Laurent and on towards the unexplored territory of St. Denis and Parc La Fontaine. Carlos talked about Joy and how upset she was because her violin had recently been stolen.

Eventually we passed Notre Dame Hospital on our right and crossed the major intersection of Papineau. It was then that we began to see an increasing number of ‘for rent / a louer’ signs. The first place we looked at was a 2 bedroom flat at the top of an outside staircase. There was plenty of space, a kitchen with a fridge and a stove, a space heater – and the rent was cheap. We decided there was no point looking further and paid the first month’s rent on the spot.

A bit later Joy drove over with some blankets, a sleeping bag, and some cushions and pillows. Suddenly, exhaustion caught up with me. I left Joy and Carlos talking, arranged my cushions and blankets in the next-door room and was asleep in no time.

\* \* \*

The next morning I awoke disoriented and hungry. Slowly my senses began to filter in a plethora of new information. The first thing I was aware of was that I was not in my bed at The Cut, as I had been the last time I had emerged from sleep. The sounds from outside were different. There was no heavy rumble of truck traffic. There were no sounds of people talking, laughing, shouting. Instead, just a steady swish of muffled engines.

I lay on my back and without moving my head, I let my eyes roam around; strong sunlight coming through an undraped, grimy window ... a bare room with wooden floors, save for my cushion and blanket bed and my suitcase and guitar in the corner by the window. Was it possible that a day earlier, I had been laying beside Françoise? I felt anguish surge through my abdomen. Françoise, my Françoise ... they were five hours ahead in London ... she would have been up for a while ... how was *she* feeling? I had abandoned her ... I had left her, my trusted companion, my only support when I had been all alone, my baby. Her warm presence had been beside me the night before. Waves of confusion and remorse swept through me. I couldn’t stand it. I had to block it out.

I got up, put on my pants and turned my attention to other matters. I checked the other rooms and saw that Carlos was still asleep. We had no food except for a box of biscuits – or was that ‘cookies’ – which Joy had left us the day before. We needed bread, and jam ... and tea, milk and sugar. I put on my shoes, found the house key that the landlord had given us, and ventured outside.

I walked up a street named Bordeaux away from Sherbrooke, and there - only a block away - was a corner store. A gruff ‘bon jour’ that sounded like ‘bonjoo’ greeted me on entering. I picked up the tea, sugar and jam but couldn’t find any milk.

“Excusez-moi, monsieur, est-ce que vous avez du lait?”

“Oui, là-bas,” came the reply.

As I was paying for my groceries, I thought to ask where the nearest pay phone was. I stumbled with my inadequate French and the gruff man behind the counter didn’t understand.

“Parlez-vous anglais?” I asked.

“Non.” Impassive look. No smile.

“Ça fait rien,” I said quickly, anxious to get out of the store.

As I walked back to the house, it hit me that this was not going to be like living near Atwater, as I had during Expo. In that part of Montreal, you could be sure that most people’s English would be better than your French. In the summer of 1967, it had bothered me sometimes that when I tried to engage a francophone in conversation, they had often replied to me in English. No such problem here, dans l’est.

Back in the house, Carlos was up. He was outside at the back on a little balcony smoking.

“How you sleep? How’s the jet-lag?” he asked good-naturedly.

“Not bad but I’m a bit disoriented. I just went out and got some food.”

“Good. I’m starving. What did you get?”

“Just basics. Tea, milk, sugar, bread, jam.”

“Why you get jam? It doesn’t help your body, just rots your teeth. Better to get cheese or sausage.”

Carlos, I had discovered, was not afraid to say what he felt on any subject. On the one hand, I liked that kind of directness. On the other, I didn’t like to be pushed.

“Well, what do you see as the plan of action for today?” I said, changing the subject.

“The first thing is we *have to* get a phone. We have to find out about murals and other people have to be able to reach us. We can no live without one.”

“I agree. I looked for a pay phone when I went to the corner store but didn’t see one.”

“I have the key to Joy’s apartment. Let’s walk over there and use her phone.” Carlos smiled and added, “she’s also got the good coffee.”

As we left, Carlos said to me:

“You remember I told you yesterday that I had a mural in mind.”

I nodded.

“Well, I will show it to you on our way to Joy’s.”

Twenty minutes later, we turned off Sherbrooke onto a side street. A few hundred yards away I could see a 3 story concrete building, surrounded by parking lots. There was a flag-staff protruding from the building, and there prominently flapping in the breeze was a large flag with the Playboy Bunny insignia on it.

“*That* building!” I exclaimed.

“Yes. Wait ‘till you see the wall.”

We walked into the parking lot on the lower side of the building and turned to face a very large windowless wall.

“Isn’t that super-fucking beautiful.” Carlos enthused. Is a perfect wall for a mural. It ... how you say that, it want to be painted ... it ask to be painted ...”

“It’s begging to be painted,” I ventured.

“Si ... ‘begging’, there you are, I got the ideas, you got the words ... we make good team.”

I glanced at Carlos as he surveyed the wall wide-eyed and alert. I got a sense, however small, of what was exciting him. For so long I had been trapped inside my mind, and the landscape there had been full of conceptual walls, fences and bridges. But this was a real wall, out there, with all its material ‘beingness’ – like Sartre’s roots without the nausea. Quite the contrary. This was not a wall to block or impede or intrude. Rather it was a wall, when looked at with the perception of an artist, that had unlimited creative potential – a massive canvas waiting to receive grandiose conceptions of color and form and rhythm.

\* \* \*

At Joy’s apartment, I called the Bell Telephone business office while Carlos brewed some coffee.

“Allo ... nous voulons un installation ... d’un ... une phone ... oui ... yes I do. O.K. ... that’s fine ... yes, I want to get a phone installed ... no, not in Quebec, I had one in Ontario about four years ago ... how long have I lived in Quebec? ... I just arrived ... well, no I don’t have a job yet, I just arrived ... in fact I’m a muralist ... muralist ... M-U-R-A-L ... yes, that’s right, muralist ... look, how much more information do you require? ... oh, we are ... we can? ... oh good ... pardon? ... a deposit? ... how much? ... \$200! ... why? ... higher risk! ... O.K. ... thank-you ... no ... goodbye.”

“What happened?” asked Carlos as he offered me a cigarette.

“I ... we have to pay \$200 because we are ‘immigrants’ and ‘unemployed’ and as such, ‘higher risk’ apparently.”

“Fucking bullshit ... that’s fucking bullshit! How we supposed to get job to make money ... money to pay deposit ... deposit to get phone, if we don’t have phone.” Carlos snorted like a bull.

“We just gonna have to use the pay phone, and Joy’s phone.”

Carlos and I sat down, drank our coffee, smoked our cigarettes and fumed. After a while, it was time to get back to business with the phone that we did have. I looked up the number of The Playboy Club and called them. I asked for the name of the Manager and was told that it was a Mr. Castelli. When I asked if he was in, I was told that he was out of town but would be back in his office after 11 a.m. the next day.

\* \* \*

That evening was spent discussing how to create the best impression on the phone the following morning.

“What if I ask how much experience we have?” I posed the question anxiously. After all, it was only the previous evening that Carlos shared with me that he had only ever done two small murals in his whole life.

“Give him what he want to hear.” You know, tell him that your Spanish friend study with a great muralist in Barcelona and that he did more study in Mexico City.”

“What if he asks if we have pictures?”

“You say ‘yes, but only of the Canadian ones.’”

“The two small ones?”

“They no so small,” said Carlos looking miffed. Anyway, you know the ones I mean. I showed you the pictures when I was in London.”

“You don’t think we would be misleading him?” I said, beginning to merge with my Sedbergh personality.

“Look, Ian. Listen to me.” Carlos drew himself up to his full 5 foot 3 inches. “I have learned a very important lesson on Life. “You don’t DO it first and THEN sell it ... no, no, no.” Carlos wagged his finger emphatically. “You sell your idea, or yourself first, THEN you have a chance to do what you said you could do.”

This was a major frontal assault on the deepest values of my Sedbergh personality. At Sedbergh, it was the exact opposite. FIRST you had to prove yourself in action, THEN you were granted an image and status. But I was intrigued. My Sedbergh personality had got me into nothing but trouble in the rat race of North America. It seemed that there were some things I could learn from Senōr Basanta. Whether or not I accepted them was another matter.

“All we need tomorrow from this guy Castelli is an appointment. That’s what you have to handle on the phone. I can handle him once I’m in a room with him.”

\* \* \*

Our first meeting with Mr. Castelli was on the 24<sup>th</sup>. May, nine days after my arrival in Montreal. In the week before the appointment, Carlos and I worked feverishly. While Carlos got busy with



preliminary designs for the 5000 square foot mural, I made a daily trek to Joy's apartment to make phone calls with respect to other possible mural projects: Café Pon-Pon, El Matador, La Sexe Machine, Chez Bourgetel, Crescent Rally Club, etc, etc.

We also discussed money.

"What do you think we should charge?" Carlos asked me.

"I haven't really got a clue. Do you think \$1000 would be too much?" I responded hesitantly,

"I was thinking more like \$2000. But I know of a Spanish muralist in Canada called Georgi Bonet. I met him once. I'm going to call him and ask his advice."

The day after we had this discussion, Carlos managed to get hold of this man, and after hearing that the mural was 5,000 square feet in size, Bonet said we shouldn't start negotiations with anything less than \$15,000. After we recovered from our shock and disbelief, we reaffirmed that Carlos would be in charge of the hard negotiations.

*Extracts from Diary: 24<sup>th</sup>. May, 1972*

*Wednesday, 3 p.m. ... Carlos and Ian incongruous in jeans and turtle neck sweaters enter Playboy Club with preliminary sketches of mural. We approach the Reception Bunny, whose plumpness is accentuated by corset-effect of bunny-bra. The ensuing conversation proceeds in Franglais:*

*"Bonjour-good day, puis je vous aide – can I help you?"*

*"We have an appointment to see Mr. Castelli."*

*"Et vos noms and your names?"*

*"Mr. Basanta and Mr. Brown."*

*"Et l'égard de quoi?"*

*"Doing a mural for the Club."*

*We spend the next five minutes nervously looking at a display case of Playboy merchandise – bathrobes, cufflinks, golf balls, whisky glasses ... all monogrammed with the ubiquitous bunny monogram. As we are contemplating a large colored framed photo of Hefner Himself, the Reception Bunny approaches and introduces us to a short, very broad, crew cut man with dark rings under his eyes. A cigar protrudes from stubby fingers festooned with rings. He looks like he just stepped out of a Jimmy Cagney movie.*

*Mr. Castelli thrusts out a hand and says, "well hi there, boys ... you're the artists I spoke to on the phone, huh? Come on up to the penthouse and we'll talk business."*

*A few minutes later, Mr. Castelli is perusing the designs on his desk.*

*"I like it, I like it ... of course you'd have to integrate the bunny somewhere in the corner."*

*Mr. Castelli pulls his feet off the desk, leans forward, and knits his bushy eyebrows which makes him look like Boris Karloff.*

*"But at this point, I must tell you boys ... and this is confidential ... we may be moving our location in the near future, so we cannot proceed until I hear one way or another. However, let me tell you, I feel optimistic. Now what is your asking price?"*

*Carlos used his Galithean charm and negotiation skills and eventually popped out the figure.*

*"\$15,000," said Mr. Castelli with a poker face. Well let me tell you that if Playboy likes something, we go get it. We ain't stingy with money. I will know by the beginning of June whether or not we're moving. So call me in a week or so and I'll have more to tell you."*

*In the evening, Carlos and I had spaghetti and meat balls with a bottle of red wine for supper.*

*Diary: June 1<sup>st</sup>. 11.30 a.m. at Joy's apartment:*

*I roll a Gitanes from my tobacco pouch and sip my coffee - trying to quell the butterflies before calling.*

*"Hello, Mr. Castelli, it's Mr. Brown here ... er, you remember, Carlos Basanta and I saw you about a week ago in connection with doing a mural ... a wall-painting ... have you heard anything about whether you're moving ... oh, you're not ... yes, yes, sure ... we can meet you next week ... which day? ... June 8<sup>th</sup>. at 3 p.m. ... O.K. ... thank-you, we'll be there ... goodbye."*

*Diary: interim period; June 1<sup>st</sup>. – June 8<sup>th</sup>.*

*Discussions at 1986 Sherbrooke turn from purely aesthetic aspects of design to practical problems of how to execute it. I suggested that perhaps we needed to investigate how to erect a scaffolding against the wall. Carlos replied that the way to do it was with a swing stage, the kind that window cleaners used. I made inquiries the next day and found a company that rented them out by the week.*

*Next problem. How to scale things up from the design drawing. For example, what does a 2 centimeter elliptical curve translate into on a 5,000 square foot wall? First a series of mind-boggling arithmetical calculations (credit to Carlos) followed by a purchase of 15 feet of steel cable along with large metal staples.*

*Next problem. How do you cover the surface of a 80 x 60 foot wall with one 30 foot swing stage in the most efficient way, taking into consideration that that there will have to be five separate coats of paint; one undercoat, two main coats, and two coats of varnish? Answer: do wall in three distinct sections, completing one section at a time.*

*Question. How long does it take for 2 people to cover 5000 square feet five times? Answer: work out how long it took Carlos to do one of his small murals, scale up, and divide by two. Conclusion: around 6 weeks.*

*Most of the time is spent on the design. What is emerging is a black background, abstract geometrical design employing bold colors like red and yellow. While Carlos does his thing, I do my alternative culture Playboy design – a satirical collage / drawing of a lecherous Hugh Hefner and an obscene voyeuristic monster, surrounded by a jungle of private parts cut and pasted from a Playboy magazine (Gala Christmas issue, Dec. 1971).*

*All discussion centers around THE WALL. We go from site to design, and design to site. This is the mother of all walls. A muralist's wet dream. Five Thousand Square Feet of windowless wall, with more than a ninety degree unobstructed view, down the gently rolling slope of an underused car park, below the major artery of Sherbrooke, with its continuous flow of cars and pedestrians. What more could anyone ask?*

*The Wall becomes a symbol for each of our ideas, hopes and desires, as well as doubts and fears. Blake said, 'see the Universe in a grain of sand' – imagine what we can see in 5000 x ? cubic feet of sand! First, a wall ... just a wall. Then, imagine a gigantic abstract painting with two midgets suspended half way up it ... there is a crowd below watching them, envying them, applauding them as they slowly and gracefully descend after their Herculean endeavors, to be greeted by Cagney Castelli and Horny Hefner and thence borne aloft by an adoring bevy of center-fold playmates.*

*Picture The Wall as a gigantic T.V. screen, bigger than anything in Times Square, where the program you see is the one projected from your mind.*

*Or imagine The Wall as a crystal ball through which one can see the future. \$15,000. Fifteen thousand dollars divided by two, \$7,500 each. What dreams that could buy! An artist's commune, an open school, a coffee house / alternative theater space, travel, a car ...*

*Now, let's get real again. What am I going to wear at the next meeting with Castelli? I'd better get my beard trimmed. Fuck! what are we going to carry the designs in? We'll have to get one of those portfolio things. They're expensive though. Remember to keep the receipt. Remember what Carlos was saying about tax-deductions.*

*Diary: June 8<sup>th</sup>.*

*3 p.m. Deflation! The Receptionist Bunny calls the Penthouse and is told that Mr. Castelli is too busy to see us now and that we should come back tomorrow. Trudge home. Spend rest of evening psychoanalyzing Mr. Castelli and his kind. Doesn't help much.*

*Diary: June 9<sup>th</sup>: 11.30 a.m.*

*Castelli there to meet us. "The wall-painters, huh? O.K. boys, you'd better come upstairs."*

*Carlos takes the design out of its beautiful new portfolio case and places it strategically on an armchair about four feet from Castelli's desk.*

*There is a long silence as Castelli scrutinizes the design. Eventually he looks up and says, "well, I think we can go ahead ... what price did you say you wanted for it?"*

*"Fifteen Thousand Dollars", Carlos says firmly and clearly.*

*"Is this negotiable?"*

*"Well, we think that this is a very fair price taking into consideration" ... bla-bla ...*

*"Well, I'm going to Chicago this weekend and I shall have to get the O.K. from them. I have authority to spend up to \$5,000 but for anything over that, it has to go to Chicago. I don't think there'll be any problem. Call me next week."*

*As we went down in the elevator, Carlos grabbed my arm and said, "we've got it man ... we've got it ... super-fucking incredible!"*



## 2.

In the days that followed, Carlos and I were in a state of high suspense. It was a time to take a break from thinking about murals. Instead, we visited the Salvation Army Store on St. Catherine's East and bought some mattresses, plates, cutlery and lamps.

I found myself lying in bed, unable to sleep, experiencing fragmented, disembodied states of consciousness in which part of me was back in London, part of me was in the Montreal of '67, and part of me was the innocent and naïve Sedbergh boy trying to figure out what was going on. It was as if each of these parts of me was trying to relate its particular dreams to the impending good news from Playboy.

I also became aware of the fact that I had been constipated for over three weeks, since arriving in Canada. The insomnia, constipation, and ongoing dental aches and pains got me thinking about health concerns. I was keeping to a meditation schedule and although I found this unfailingly calming for the mind, I knew that my body needed something more. One day Carlos and I were talking about different ways to exercise and he told me that he did hatha yoga, although not on a regular basis. I asked him to show me a few positions. As a result of his demonstration and explanation, I began doing five basic positions or *asanas* before my meditation; these were *uddiyana*, *paschimottanasana*, *bhujangasana*, *sarvangasana* and *dhanurasana*. I also began to understand the significance of deep breathing and I added this to my routine which had now grown to 4 interconnected activities: (1) initially, laying flat on my stomach and writing in my diary whatever seemed to need to come out, i.e. thoughts, feelings, questions, narration of events, lists of things to do, etc. (2) laying on my back on the floor and doing deep breathing in combination with tensing and relaxation of all the sets of muscles; meanwhile, maintaining body consciousness with my mind, (3) doing the *asanas*, (4) getting into a cross legged position with my back to a wall and engaging in transcendental meditation. I found that the bareness of our flat and the lack of material possessions, including a phone and a TV, helped me focus on the importance of building a habit out of this routine. After the identity implosions of London, I felt as if these activities were slowly aiding a healthy and healing internal re-construction. It felt as if I was re-building my self from the inside out.

*Diary entry: June 13<sup>th</sup>.*

*6.30 p.m. It is time to check what is happening chez Castelli. Carlos and I walk to Joy's apartment. I make the call.*

*Castelli says: "I'm afraid I'll have to keep you hanging on a string for a little longer, I haven't heard from Chicago yet. Call back at the end of the week."*

Suddenly, everything had changed. If Castelli had gone to Chicago like he had said he was going to, why did he say that he 'hadn't heard from Chicago yet'? Maybe he went and they told him that they would let him know at a later date. Logical, but somehow it didn't ring true. Whichever way you looked at it, in our eyes the credibility gap had widened considerably. Castelli's image had shifted from benevolent fairy godfather back to a dubious hybrid of Mafia gangster and Boris Karloff.

Our money was nearly all gone. July's rent would have to be paid soon. What if the deal fell through? What if we not only didn't get \$15,000, but got nothing at all? Why hadn't I heard from anyone in Britain? What was I doing here anyway?

I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, I couldn't write and I could barely shit. On top of all this, the weather was oppressive – unbearably hot and humid, thunderstorms brewing. Nothing to do but wait. Waiting for Castelli.

Diary entry: June 19<sup>th</sup>: 11.30 a.m.

Castelli: "The mural? Yes, it's definitely on. See me next Wednesday, that's the 21<sup>st</sup>, at 11.30 a.m. to finalize."

Diary entry: June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Shock, relief, exhaustion, excitement. Time to eat, sunbathe, dream again. Time to announce to the world that we have got the Playboy mural. Well ... no, tell the folks in London tomorrow after we've got a signed contract and check in our hands.

And then the dreams give way to immersion in the here and now reality. For the first time, we started looking into the business and legal aspects of the mural. Tax ... what about tax? How much do they rip off from \$15,000? We figured that for tax purposes it might be worth forming a partnership.

So today, Carlos and I walked down to the Palais de Justice on Nôtre Dame and for the nominal fee of \$5 (less than the cost of getting married) we sign a self-typed document and officially become:

**Basanta & Brown**  
**Artists – Muralists in Partnership**

We leave, still not knowing much about what being 'in partnership' means, except that it enables us to have checks made out to the corporate entity of 'Basanta & Brown', and also give us legal protection from each other!

After supper this evening, we discussed arranging a celebration party for the weekend, confronting Ma Bell and handing over the fucking \$200 deposit, getting Joy a new violin, and approaches to handling press interviews.

Diary entry: June 21<sup>st</sup>.

Finally, the day of reckoning! We have breakfast of tea and cigarettes. Because it is pouring with rain outside, we decide to take a bus. We arrive in plenty of time to have our customary cup of coffee at a nice little basement place on Sherbrooke. That has always been part of our ritual before so it would be fatal to miss it out this time. We watch transfixed as the minute hand of the Coca-Cola clock moves unwaveringly onward to the magic half-hour. B. & B. drain their coffees at three minutes to go, smile at the friendly waitress, leave a big tip, gather up the expensive portfolio case and set off for the final rendez-vous.

B. & B. pulls on the bunny-monogrammed door handle and steps inside the now familiar twilight of the Montreal Playboy Club. The corporate body strides purposefully across the plush bunny-monogrammed carpet, confident that this time, the Reception Bunny will be full of recognition.

B & B: "Hello, we have an appointment to see Mr. Castelli.

Reception Bunny: "I'm sorry but Mr. Castelli is no longer with us."

(a different one)

B & B: "What do you mean?"

Bunny: "Mr. Castelli left us yesterday."

B & B: "But we just spoke to him here yesterday."

Bunny: "All I can tell you is that some senior executives flew in from Chicago late yesterday afternoon and then a few hours later the staff were informed that Mr. Castelli was no longer the manager here."

*B & B: "Are they still here?"*  
*Bunny: "Who?"*  
*B & B: "The people from Chicago."*  
*Bunny: "As a matter of fact, they are in conference upstairs at this moment."*  
*B & B: "Can you ..."*  
*Bunny: "I don't think this would be a good time to disturb them. You could call this afternoon."*

*Later, on the phone, some explanation was provided by a Mr. House. He told us he didn't know anything about a mural. Nor did he think that Mr. Castelli had had any right to authorize it. Without being explicit, it was evident that Mr. Castelli had been given the axe.*

*At this moment of shock and mourning, all one can say is, 'where are you now Victor, our one and only fairy godfather? Lying at the bottom of the St. Lawrence, shod in concrete?'*

\* \* \*

The good news was that Carlos and I were united in our misery. After the inevitable depression that followed, we regained our fighting spirit and resumed the hunt for suitable walls.

Fortunately, we had success with one of the many contacts we had made over the previous month. The manager of a restaurant on the corner of Crescent and De Maisonneuve agreed to let us do a small mural on the Crescent Street side of the restaurant. The restaurant was called Café Pon Pon and the manager's name Mr. Viralis. The thing that interested us about this particular restaurant was that on the De Maisonneuve side, there was a very large wall that was directly opposite to the most prominent mural in Montreal – one that had been painted a few years earlier.

While working on the small mural, we approached Mr. Viralis about the possibility of doing a mural on the big wall, which was also part of the Café Pon Pon property. Mr. Viralis was not only open to the idea, he seemed genuinely interested. However, he said that he had no money for such a project. After discussing the situation, Carlos and I decided that we would make the offer to do it free of charge if he would pay for the materials. When we finished the small mural, Mr. Viralis was pleased with the result and it was then that he agreed to let us do the large wall.

This was not in the same league as the Playboy mural, but the more we thought about it, the more we started to get excited.

"The location is super-fucking good," said Carlos. "Right in the heart of Montreal's night-life scene, right opposite that other mural that got so much publicity."

Because the dimensions of the wall were not dissimilar to those of the Playboy wall, Carlos decided to show Mr. Viralis the same sketches for approval. Viralis said he liked what he saw and agreed to pay material expenses and provide us with meals for the week to ten days that it would take to complete the mural. We had a deal.

On the 28<sup>th</sup>. July, we started the project. The wall to be painted was directly above the restaurant so all our work would have to be done from a swing stage. On the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup>, our life support was delivered from a company called Scaffold-Swing-Stage (Quebec) Ltd. on Décarie.

When it came to our maiden voyage down the sheer wall from the roof, Carlos admitted that he was scared. Perhaps I would have been too except that I had had lots of experience as a member of the Mountain Rescue Unit at Sedbergh in descending cliff faces with stretchers secured by ropes. On the other hand, remembering the piano that had so nearly fallen in London, I made sure I monitored the installation of the cable and pulley system.

Finally, we were doing it, not just talking about it. Quickly we fell into a routine and rhythm of work; start work by nine, have cigarette and coffee breaks when we chose, stop for a good restaurant lunch, work on throughout the afternoon, and pack up by six.

From the onset, we attracted a lot of attention. Once people had ascertained that we were not 'just' tradesmen fixing holes in the wall or some such thing, the word began to spread that another mega-mural was on the way. Although Carlos had graciously offered not only to split any proceeds 50/50 but also sign the finished mural 'Carlos Basanta and Ian Brown', I was beginning to react against the reoccurring situation in which we would clarify to others that Carlos was the artist and I was just his helper. Things would have been better if Carlos had recognized and supported my own creative aspirations. But Carlos was single-mindedly focused on his own interests and ambitions and there was only a lukewarm interest in my burning desire to write and explore dramatic and educational interests. Carlos also had an immediate affinity with Mr. Viralis who was Greek. Seeing the two of them chatting and smoking over their espresso coffees, and spicing their conversation with the odd Spanish or Greek phrase, made me wonder about the macho world of Mediterranean men. It wasn't that Carlos never become weak or vulnerable. It was just that whatever his state, the expression had dramatic flair and self-affirming confidence (even if it was a bluff). Carlos was an Aries and I was a Scorpio. He was an initiator and a dominator. I felt I had more power than Carlos but it lay deep within, hidden and dormant much of the time. I was too prone to the scorpion-like behavior of hidden resentments building up to extreme reactions. I only used or owned a fraction of my power. Sometimes I saw Carlos as a 250 cc Honda motorbike pretending to be a 650, whereas in my case it felt like the other way round. Part of it, of course, was also the British reserve and modesty and distaste for self-promotion. In the case of Carlos, I both admired and resented his propensity to blow his own trumpet.

One area that this tension became apparent was in the company of women. One of the few people from Expo '67 days that I had contacted was a former British Pavilion hostess called Jill Frappier. She had married a French Canadian film director called Roger and they lived in a house overlooking Carré St. Louis. Jill was an English comic actress in the vein of Margaret Rutherford (only much younger) with the kind of sensibility and expression you might find in an Agatha Christie or even 'Carry On' film.

I visited Jill and Roger's house regularly and in addition to chatting, I would take the opportunity to play their piano. Usually I went on my own. However on the couple of occasions that I had invited Jill to our apartment, Carlos had been there and the dynamic that evolved was very different from just Jill and I together. It was as if with Carlos, there could only be one artist, and he was that artist. With his air of hubris, Carlos reminded me of both Salvador Dali and my father. But many women seemed to like the rooster that strutted and crowed. Even the ones who gave lip service to feminism fell back and clucked approvingly when a self-appointed rooster started his strut.

In short, I got resentful and jealous of Carlos when he was doing his strut. If it was in his barnyard, like with his girl-friend Anna in London, or with Joy in Montreal, I could accept it, but if it was in my barnyard or out in the field, then I had a problem. Ever since Lesley and Ellie had skewered my innate trust, I had become more sensitive to boundaries and 'territorial imperatives'. Like Joy, Jill seemed to become pliant and deferential when around Carlos, and I found increasingly that I wanted to avoid triangle situations with both of them.

I also knew that although the 'Basanta and Brown' label helped assuage my feelings of sub-ordination, it was an illusion. The reality was that I was doing a lot of unpaid work *for* Carlos, for which



ultimately *he* would get credit.

I began to consciously set aside a little time each day to follow up on my own interests and aspirations. As I wrote my diary, slowly the torturous self-examination of the previous year seemed to be getting results. Although I had been immersed in a Hamlet-like state of paralysis and inability to make choices, at least the options had become clarified and defined:

*Diary entry: July 11<sup>th</sup>.*

*I want to create. I want to relate to people again. I want to live Life again, to feel - not think, to experience not study.*

*A search for guidance leads me back to Miller. I read. I am inspired. I try to apply. I seek to rejoin the flow of life. Failure. Loss of confidence as teacher. Failure as artist.*

*Experiments in the medium of writing show me that I have an ear for, and an affinity with, the spoken word. This leads me towards dialogue and inevitably drama.*

*But I am resistant to both the role of actor and the role of writer. The former re-enacts life but does not act upon it. The latter records life in words, dramatizes it, but like the actor does not directly impact it.*

*The relationship between Art and Life becomes clearer. Art is indirect communication. There is an intervening medium – the bridge between creator and perceiver. I begin to see that, for me, the most worthwhile activity would involve direct communication with people. I begin to see that rather than order matter into creative form, I want to help order Life.*

*I want to help the creative process. I want to facilitate the realization of creative potential that exists in everyone, not just a chosen few. I want to put my energies towards finding or creating a social form, or framework within which such activity can find motivation, inspiration and growth.*

*Today I went to McGill library and for the first time came across the term 'developmental drama'. I was immediately excited and looked up reference books on the subject. Developmental drama seems to be an overlapping area that interconnects my interests in drama, play, education, therapy, self-realization. It seems to be an area in which action, thought, feeling, instinct, intuition, spontaneity, imagination and authentic communication can and do co-exist and feed off each other. It seems holistic in scope and focused on process rather than product.*

*I want to further investigate both playwriting and developmental drama possibilities in Montreal.*



### 3.

My partnership with Carlos, both business and personal, didn't last long. By the end of July we finished the mural. There was some publicity, including a front page picture and article in the Montreal Star (5/8/72).



**What are they up to?**

Staff Photo by John Dappelt

Ian Brown and Carlos Basanta (right) are street artists. They believe in taking art to the people, in this case, the passersby on a busy corner in downtown Montreal. Ian is a former sociology student and Carlos has a degree in astrophysics. Does that give you any clues as to their subject matter? See photo and story on page A-2.

**Weather takes a dive**

Winter job projects under

FIFTEEN CENTS FORECAST: Today: Sunny, cool. Tomorrow: Cool, overcast (Details on Page A-4)

**The Montreal Star**

ENTERTAINMENTS TV RADIO NEWS AND REVIEW WEEKEND

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I had found Carlos's ego and lack of support for my ambitions just too much to take. I needed my own space. During July, Frank Wheeler visited from Toronto. It was not a good couple of days. Just as Carlos and I were going in different directions, the same shift seemed to be present with Frank and I. In other words, whereas Carlos was 'an artist', and Frank was 'a musician', I was increasingly strengthening my commitment towards Education as a career choice.

Even though I was working on a play, 'The Interview', I had not accomplished enough in writing to think of myself as 'a writer'. I felt like an outsider to the real or imagined fraternal ambience of Carlos and Frank.

Despite the healthy, fit-looking young man in the picture above, my mental state was not good. My own ego was extremely fragile following the traumatic experiences of London and uprooting back to Canada. The image that kept coming to me at that time was of a cracked egg. I wrote a poem entitled, 'Humpty Dumpty'.

## Humpty Dumpty

*Visions of horror*

*'The Scream' by Munch*

*'Agony' by Gorky*

*Gut gray, death black, twisted nerve-end pink*

*Coiled and convoluted*

*Anxiety short-circuits the synapses*

*Frustration blocks the pathways*

*Total lack of confidence*

*Drains the energy fluids*

*Spare me from having to*

*Face the world*

*Face myself*

*Face what some call reality*

*Spare me the embarrassment of*

*Screaming out*

*"Who can guide me?"*

*"Who can help me?"*

*"Who can take me in?"*

*How can I say what this is like?*

*How can anyone understand?*

*Implosion*

*Brain-fragments tearing through*

*Tortured, twisted tissue*

*'What do you want?' they ask*

*If there is no one 'I'*

*What do you want 'me' to say?*

*How am I supposed to respond?*

*If there are 10 'me's' and 10 options*

*What is the statistical probability*

*Of all ten 'me's' making the same choice*

*At the same time?*

*If 6 or 7 'me's' happen to make the same choice*

*Then, perhaps a kind of composite democratic 'I' exists*

*Perhaps*

*But then none of the 'me's' are really convinced*

*I certainly don't know what me wants*

*And me haven't a clue about what I is looking for*

*Fragmentation*  
*A world of dichotomies and dilemmas*  
*This OR that*  
*Good OR bad*  
*Active OR passive*

*The experience of this AND that*  
*Becomes as unlikely as finding the Holy Grail in your attic*

*Then*  
*Slowly*  
*A painful transition from the laser-like 'why'*  
*To the more vital question of 'how'*  
*How to be*  
*'At one'*  
*With one's self*  
*One self*

*Some answers trickle in*  
*Stop the barrage of input*  
*Start to express*  
*Find the flow of output*  
*Expound*  
*Expand*  
*Extemporize*  
*Get rid of some of those superfluous thoughts*

*Why go for indirect experience*  
*Through TV or a book*  
*When you can plug directly into Reality*  
*With no compromise?*

*Be ruthless*  
*Have a revolution*  
*Deconstruct old*  
*And useless forms*  
*Discard and destroy decaying attitudes and ideas*

*If you don't need it*  
*Throw it away*  
*If you don't want it*  
*Throw it away*  
*If you don't believe in it*  
*Throw it away*

*Then*  
*Re-structure*  
*Reform*  
*Rebuild*

*Revolve and evolve  
Recharge  
Rediscover flow  
And allow the spiral of life  
To reach upward and outward again*

*And without trying too hard  
One self will begin to emerge  
And you will taste your food  
And a light will begin to show in your eyes  
And you will be able  
Once again  
To rest in peace*

I felt like my ego-identity had been shattered into fragments. It was hard to live with, or inside a Humpty Dumpty ego-egg that had cracked open to expose a negative self concept. I felt I had to glue back together pieces of my wholesome Sedbergh self into some kind of workable, operational identity.

\* \* \*

Around that time, I received two letters, one of which brought out my growing anger with respect to certain kinds of women, the other – my love and caring.

*Extracts from Letter from Lesley: 16/8/72*

- ❖ *doing 6 weeks of summer school in dance at York University. “the rarified bourgeois atmosphere of York U. drives me out of my head ... I have decided to return to Paris and continue my studies with Nora Kiss whose method I understand.”*
- ❖ *fucked-up relationship with astronomer friend Frank (he was married and had lied to Lesley) “I have little faith in ever attaining a fulfilling relationship with a man – because they always seem to want to take over my life and force me into a subservient, secondary relationship to them. Personally, I can’t stand it. Politically, as an ardent feminist, I rebel against it.*
- ❖ *“materialism – in any form – whether people, food, money, revolts me. I used to place a great importance in these things but I realize now that they only tie you down”:*
- ❖ *“China fascinates me ... I am about to start Moravia’s ‘The Red Book and The Great Wall’.*

*Extracts from Letter from Françoise: 18/8/72*

- ❖ *“I’ve got a job at ‘The Dirtiest Show In Town’ doing the lights (at Duchess theatre, £16 / week; 1½ hours / 6 evenings a week. Got job through Maureen.*
- ❖ *“whatever happens, you know I’ll always be with you.”*

I was beginning to have to differentiate between different types of women. For example, I had experienced real differences between North American and European women. I was also seeing (although not yet able to conceptualize) that the Women's Movement was coalescing into two camps; one camp I wholeheartedly supported – namely women who wanted social change (including radical social change) so that there could be true equality between the genders. The other camp was beginning to manufacture a kind of reverse sexism based on notions of 'special rights' and 'entitlement'. For example, Ellie felt she had the 'right' to have a baby by me without consultation. She further felt she had the right to give birth to and raise this child with no participation from me whatsoever. Apparently, I had no rights at all. For her part, Lesley felt that as an 'ardent feminist', she could berate the infidelity of a lover (to his wife!) while not once apologizing or showing regret for having an affair with a friend of mine behind my back. In their minds, the existence of Patriarchy and historical oppression of women seemed to justify a 'carte blanche' with respect to moral obligations to men.

My relationship with Françoise had been different. If there had been betrayal, it came from me and my decision to return to Canada on my own. I had not betrayed her in terms of a relationship with another woman, but I had reneged on my commitment to our relationship.

\* \* \*

During August, I sank deeper into a black depression. I wanted to leave Carlos and get a place of my own, but I had no money – literally. I had no income. I had to get a job.

In the second week of September, I started working at 'A Matter Of Opinion', a boutique in Old Montreal run by Chas and Lawrence, former security guards at The British Pavilion. With the knowledge that I would be making some money, I told Carlos that I was moving out. I found a room on Carré St Louis, a few doors away from Jill and Roger's apartment. As it turned out, the boutique job didn't last very long after I mistakenly sold a \$70 Matrushka doll for \$7.

The humidity and oppressive heat of the summer was over. As the leaves turned red and golden in Carré St Louis and nearby Parc La Fontaine, I began to feel more grounded. I *was* back in Canada and beginning to settle down. The first time I had come to Canada had been as a student. I had a scholarship and with it a drive to prove myself at university. This time, I had only been permitted entry as a 'sponsored immigrant'. This meant that I did not have the safety net of welfare. Given that Joy (my sponsor) had made it clear that she did not have the means to provide financial support, there was no safety net other than Unemployment Insurance. Fortunately, one could be eligible for U.I. after only 10 weeks of work, and at that time 'quitting' did not disentitle you.

I had wanted to start over in Canada without money or possessions. I had a Bugger All in Sociology – that was true, but other than that, I felt like I was starting from scratch. I wanted to rise like a phoenix from the ashes of my failures in London – I wanted to rise on my own merits and on my own resources, not because of privilege or unfair advantage. I wanted to *know* what it was like to experience extreme deprivation. I had been under the scaffold and I was still there. I needed to see clearly where, when, and how I wanted to climb.

My new home, my room on Carré St. Louis, was on the top floor and looked out onto the Square. I was back to living *par seul*. In some ways it was like picking up from where I had left off in my monastic cell on Montreal Street in Kingston, three years previous. Sometimes, I felt as if the intervening years in London were a figment of my imagination, or the lingering memory of a nightmare.

*Diary entry: 27/9/72*

*I heard the following quote from Babarandus on CHOM F.M. today:*

*'Once the melodrama is over, namus de.'*

*Once the dyadic cyclones have dissipated, once the ritual scourging of the guilt-ridden nomadic monad has run its course, once the unnecessary but necessary melodrama is over, then I can name the God within ... within you, within me ...*

*Naming the God within is definitely being helped by all the meditation and yoga I am doing at present. I have a Chesterfield so when I need floor space to do my asanas, I collapse the sofa, and my sleeping space is magically transformed into my spiritual place.*

I soon found, however, that inner contemplation was frequently challenged by loud and passionate sounds emanating from next door. My immediate neighbors were Isabelle and Pierre, a young couple who had an extraordinarily robust sex life. I had never before heard the cries of a woman's orgasm, so unrestrained, so prolonged, and so frequent. Shrieks of "ooo, fait-le", "oh, c'est bon", "ah oui ... oui ... OUI!" penetrated the wall between our rooms and echoed through the hallway.

After a few weeks in my new home, I became aware of two other occupants of 260 Carré St Louis. In counterpoint to the sexual rhythms of next door were the strident and equally frequent percussive rock rhythms from downstairs. These came from the drum kit of a Gilles Dozois, a musician who seemed to practice all day and every day, and never go out to gig. The other person that I began to notice coming and going was the person who lived across the hall from me. Her name was Jackie Burroughs and in a very short time we introduced ourselves, went out for coffee, and finished up in bed together, adding our own compositions to the overall orchestral score.

Jackie was an actress from Toronto. She was in Montreal for a couple of months, making a movie. Jackie was the first woman I'd met since Muriel (the model with whom I'd had a torrid fling during Expo 67) who was unabashedly into fucking for the sake of fucking. As it turned out, she was also the first woman I'd met who articulated a point of view that society was *not* simply a patriarchal conspiracy in which all women were oppressed by all men. When I showed her entries in my diary that dealt with my anger over the betrayals by Lesley and Ellie, she told me that she felt my words were "clear" and "fair".

I had just started reading Carlos Castaneda's Journey To Ixtlam at the time, and when I found out that Jackie had already read it, we entered into a series of long, animated discussions about 'self-importance', becoming a 'hunter', a 'warrior', and a 'man of knowledge' - and the differences between the three.

*Diary entries: October, 1972:*

❖ *On not being taken for granted* (from Carlos Castaneda)

*"Erase personal history so that you cannot be taken for granted or have to explain everything. Create a fog around yourself – an exciting and mysterious state. Don't take yourself so seriously. You are so goddamn important that you feel justified to be annoyed with everything. As long as you think you are the most important thing in the world you cannot really appreciate the world around you. You are like a horse with blinders, all you see is yourself apart from everything else."*

❖ *On not being too accessible*

*"You lost your girlfriend because you were too accessible; you were always within her reach ... don't use and squeeze people until they have shriveled to*



*nothing, especially the people you love. To worry is to become accessible. And once you worry, you cling to anything out of desperation.”*

❖ Hunter → Warrior → Man Of Knowledge

- *How a **hunter** acts:*  
“Most people move from act to act without any struggle or thought. A hunter, on the contrary, assesses every act; and since he has an intimate knowledge of his death, he proceeds judiciously as if every act were his last battle.”
- “A **warrior** is an impeccable hunter that hunts power. If he succeeds in his hunting, he can be a man of knowledge ... the mood of a warrior calls for control over himself and at the same time, it calls for abandoning himself.”
- “To look at a rock is doing, but to see it is not-doing. ‘Truth’ doesn’t matter. If things are said to be true, a warrior would act in order to be doing. If things are said to be untrue, he still would act in order to be not-doing. It is not a matter of understanding but of mastery. Seeing, of course, is the final accomplishment of a **man of knowledge**, and seeing is attained only when one has stopped the world through the techniques of not-doing. Instead of telling yourself ‘the truth’, that you are ugly and rotten and inadequate, tell yourself that you are the complete opposite, knowing that you are lying; this may hook you to another doing, and then you may realize that both doings are lies, and that to hinge yourself to either one is a waste of time, because the only thing that is real is the being in you that is going to die. To arrive at that being is the not-doing of the self. A warrior is not a clown, at the mercy of other people. A warrior is like a pirate that has no qualms in taking and using anything he wants, except that the warrior doesn’t mind or he doesn’t feel insulted when he is used and taken himself.”

I wanted to be a warrior and a man of knowledge. I was beginning to see how the skills of a hunter were also necessary for survival in the concrete jungle. I *had* let myself be taken for granted. I *did* explain everything. I *did* take myself too seriously. I did worry. I did make myself too accessible. I didn’t carefully assess each act as if it was my last. I didn’t know the techniques of ‘not-doing’ that included lying to oneself. I had hidden behind the clown’s mask, especially at Sedbergh. And I was not at all like a pirate. ‘A warrior is like a pirate that has no qualms in taking and using anything he wants’ sounded more like Carlos B. than me. There was much to think about in Castaneda’s ideas, much that seemed relevant, much to learn.

Diary entry: 15/10

*Jackie said: “I am really a groupie at heart ... I went on tour with Janis Joplin and fucked all the Grateful Dead ... I’m not sure about most things, but I am sure about fucking ...”*

*Jackie is an Aquarian ... an air sign ... un oiseau de passage ... I told her that she really did look a like a bird sometimes ... she said, “yes, and also a lizard”.*

*She tells me that in addition to weed, she does speed. She certainly gives the impression of being in perpetual motion.*

*I was telling Jackie the other day how I found it hard to do something as passive as sitting on my arse for hours in order to write. She said: “you should become*

*weaker ... that's why Gilles can stay in all day ... he's so emaciated ... quite often with me, it's not nerves but too much energy that gets me edgy." She's right. I have too much energy (psychic, emotional, physical). I have to find more outlets for it..*

In November, Jackie finished her shooting and returned to Toronto. I found a bundle of stuff outside my door the day that she left. There was a note that read as follows:

*'Dear Neighbor,*

*Here is your sweater and an option on two dying plants – they never liked me much – but maybe they might love you and resurrect – if not, just leave them to die in the hall ... I just couldn't leave them all alone in my room.*

*I love all our conversations and the rest of it too ... 'keep up' as the Kundalinis say.*

*I shall love you in absentia (I was always better at that anyway) – Jackie B.'*

## 4.

My teeth were in terrible shape. Years of pancakes and syrup, improper brushing and no flossing had created a honeycomb of cavities. I had already undergone some extractions and had been told that in order to avoid more, I needed a root canal, crown and bridge – an estimated bill of \$550. This meant that any disposable income I had was needed for dental expenses. Unfortunately, neither yoga, meditation, nor Castaneda had a solution to this problem.

One day I got a call from Iain Anderson. I knew he was back in Canada and living in Montreal with his Swedish girlfriend, Britt. He had stayed with me at The Cut in London for a few days earlier in the year. At that time I had felt torn between my interest in his work for the underground newspaper ‘Friendz’, and my anger at him for having an affair with Lesley. Like Lesley, he pretended to not understand why I ‘held on’ to the past. The ‘sexual revolution’ was fueled by the pill, marihuana and fuzzy ethics. I was not against the pill. I was no longer against marihuana. I *was* against fuzzy, contradictory or plain hypocritical ethics. Loyalty was a cardinal virtue at Sedbergh. At the same time that it was facilitating freedom of expression, the sexual revolution was undermining self-restraint and loyalty. Even in the counterculture, lip service was still paid to monogamous partnership as in the expression ‘my old lady’, but Iain Anderson’s explanation of his tryst with Lesley, “it just happened”, typified the rationalization of betrayal. Even the word ‘betrayal’ had been excised from many people’s vocabulary. The words ‘belong’ and ‘possess’ *were* used, but only with negative connotation – at least as regards relationships; where money and property were concerned, that was another matter. For many people, rationalization merged into justification – “I wasn’t growing”, “*Love is a profound urge to preserve and extend life in all its manifestations*” (from Ellie’s note to me shortly after taking up with Roy).

Iain Anderson had called me to tell me of work as a proof-reader with a company called Aquilla BST in Place Victoria.

“Britt and I worked there for a while,” he said. “It’s easy work. Most of the people there are students or ex-students. Just about everyone smokes dope. There’s no boss standing over you.”

I had applied for a Manpower French course but it didn’t start until January or February, so I decided to go ahead and apply.

\* \* \*

I was still hesitant about smoking dope but slowly I was opening to the experience (especially after reading Don Juan’s advocacy of using peyote to Carlos Castaneda).

About a week before Christmas, I had an extraordinary experience. I had been going to a place called ‘Theatre Workshop’ as an aid to my playwriting ambitions. One of the teachers there, Daniel Landau, had invited me to a party at his house on Amherst and I had decided to go.

As I greeted Daniel and stepped into his apartment, it dawned on me that not only was Daniel gay, but he had invited me to a gay party. The apartment was crowded with at least twenty men, some in the living room, some in the kitchen – not a woman in sight. My first thought was that I had struck out as far as having any action myself that night.

My thoughts were interrupted by Daniel.

“Wanna toké?” he said, offering me a large joint. “I suppose you don’t know anyone here. This’ll help.”

I accepted and took several long drags.

“Make yourself at home,” Daniel said as he bustled off to greet some new arrivals.

I got a drink and looked around for my ‘spot’. It wasn’t in the kitchen – too hectic. It wasn’t in the living room where four or five couples were conversing. My eyes focused on an empty sofa in a recessed area set back from the passageway connecting the kitchen and the living room. ‘That’s my spot,’ I thought to myself. ‘Somewhere on the fringe where I can observe what’s going on.’

I sat down and lit a cigarette. I was feeling the first signs of a cannabis high – music more defined and three dimensional; light and color softening and intermingling in harmonious, flowing patterns. By the time I finished the cigarette, I realized that the high was taking me somewhere else, an uncomfortable place. I felt as if I was completely disconnected from what was happening around me. More than this, I was disconnected from myself. I felt empty, hollow. Even if I had wanted to, I didn’t have the strength to initiate any kind of social interaction. I considered leaving, but as time passed and no-one entered my space, I began to feel that this recessed area really was the perfect spot in which to be an objective observer. There was a constant stream of traffic back and forth between the kitchen to my left and the living room to my right. I had an unobstructed view of both rooms.

And I was curious. The last prolonged contact that I’d had with the gay scene was when I had worked as a dishwasher at the Shillober restaurant in London. But I had never been to an exclusively gay party and there was much about the way gays behaved that I didn’t understand. Even as a hollow man, I could still put on my sociologist’s spectacles.

One guy, in particular, drew my attention. He was one of those impossibly good-looking men that women hoped fervently wasn’t gay. Dressed all in black, he was standing in the living-room talking to a shorter man in an orange shirt. The first thing I noticed was that he was smoking black Sobranies. The short guy was doing all the talking. The good-looking guy appeared to be bored. He was scanning the room and had his body slightly inclined away from the orange shirt. He was clearly looking for an avenue of escape. Sure enough, two minutes later, he abruptly detached himself and wandered past me towards the kitchen. I had seen him throwing a few rapid glances in the direction of a bearded, muscular man who was in conversation by the window. I kept watching – the plot and action were just beginning to kick in.

By the time that Mr. Sobranie returned from the kitchen, I was clear that the doors of my perception had been blasted off. I was being flooded with all kinds of data. Before, I had been feeling or sensing energy fields around people, now I was actually seeing them. ‘So this is what they mean by ‘auras’’, I thought to myself. Everyone that I looked at had a visible sphere of vibrating energy around them. With some, the energy was intense and pulsating, with others it was weaker. But in addition to this personal field of energy, people were quite literally sending each other vibes, electronic mail through the ether, long before the age of computer generated e-mails. Some people were sending ‘I’m bored / release me – set me free’ messages to the person they were with, while at the same time scanning for incoming messages and dispatching special delivery ‘come hither’ glances to objects of interest. Other people, the ones with weak auras, emitted a kind of clinging vibration that said ‘don’t leave me / let me hold on to you’.

My God, there it all was; yin and yan, the *vis centripita* and the *vis centrifuga*, a universe of variable positive and negative energy, of magnetic attraction and repulsion. And what was extraordinary was that most of the time, the visible body language was at odds with the verbal output. For example, I could see and hear couples in which the more powerful of the two (as measured by the intensity of aura) would be saying things like “that’s really interesting” while clearly showing that his interest lay elsewhere. It was as if, here in Daniel’s apartment, I had gone through a portal into the Castaneda world of *seeing* and *not-doing*.

Of course, there was inevitably the voice of skepticism grumbling in the background, 'yes, but how do you know that this is real? – you are high after all'. It occurred to me that I could put this challenge to the test, right there and then. I had reached the point where I felt I was 'tuned in' to such an extent that I could actually predict what was going to happen by simply reading the body language signals. I could see when two separate vibrations 'locked in' on the same wavelength, and how again and again, a few minutes later, the people in question would start to make moves towards each other.

By now, the good-looking guy had hooked up with the guy by the window. In their case, it looked as if the auras were of a similar intensity, the energy fields balanced. 'Hmm, well-matched,' I thought to myself. I sensed that the 'questing' antenna had been turned off and that the two guys had already come to a stable arrangement, at least for that night. On the other hand, the guy in the orange shirt, appeared ever more to be a victim, increasingly clingy as each rejection pushed him into a downward spiral. Each time I looked at him, it was as if his aura had become still weaker and was no longer an output so much as a black hole vacuum. Others could sense that he was a needy energy vampire, and avoided him.

I was astounded. Prediction after prediction came true. I vowed to pay more attention to people's body language rather than their verbal smokescreens from there on.

"You look lonely", said Daniel putting a hand on my shoulder.

"No, actually I'm having a good time," I replied. "Just hanging out."

A thought flashed through my mind. Maybe Daniel fancied me? That was the thing, my reading of signals became much less efficient when I was involved. I didn't know if this was due to lack of experience or just low self-esteem.

But I was a little curious about the possibility of having a sexual experience with a man. However, at the same time, I was not at all attracted to being part of the gay culture.

As I was leaving, I looked over my shoulder and sure enough, Mr. Sobranie was still with the bear, and their body postures were square on to each other.

\* \* \*

The snow lay fresh on the ground. I trudged back from my dental appointment. I had just had a root canal and I was in pain. On the way back, I stopped and picked up half a pound of Polish sausage from a butcher that always seemed to be cheaper than anywhere else.

Back at 260 Carré St Louis, I found a Christmas card from Francoise. I took it upstairs, made a cup of instant coffee, rolled a Gitanes, and opened the envelope. As I read the card, a surge of emotional pain mingled with the pain in my gums. I could feel tears welling up.

Francoise was upset at the lack of news. As she put it:

*"I mean I knew you for 2 years. I knew so much about you. I've loved you so much and we are so far away at present ... I want to go to Canada although the idea frightens me. I'd rely too much on you emotionally, so perhaps I'd better stick to staying in England ... I hope you're happy ... my ian, you're so much a part of me ... baby, please write soon ... I get so much pain ..."*

'I get so much pain' ... 'I get so much pain' ... the words wrenched my heart and the tears flowed. We were both in so much pain. I wanted to be with my baby, my sweet Francoise, but I was scared of the implications of her coming to Canada.

It was the 23<sup>rd</sup>. December, two days before ... well two days before a Christmas Day that was unplanned and dreaded. In the evening I fried my Polish sausage and made some brown rice. That night I dreamed of Francoise.

The next morning, I did not feel well. There were pains in my stomach in kidney area – pains of a kind and intensity that I had not experienced before. Throughout the day, the pains got worse. By evening, I had started vomiting. I vomited all night and at 4 a.m. I noticed that my urine was dark brown in color. When I tried to lie down again, the pain had become so great that I could not find any position that would provide relief. At that point I knew I needed to get to a hospital.

It was too early for buses and I didn't have enough money for a taxi. I pulled on my boots, gasping in pain, and set off through a snow-storm to walk to the Royal Vic Hospital. As the snow-flakes hit my face, there were little shocks of the freezing substance coming into contact with my burning face. On top of everything else, I could tell that I had a high fever. The stomach pains were convulsive and unbearable. The pain killers I had been given for the root canal were doing nothing.

Eventually I reached the hospital and stumbled through the Emergency entrance. Inside, I had to find my medical card and then wait and wait ... and wait. What was I supposed to do? I had told them I was in a lot of pain. Was I supposed to scream to get attention? My Sedbergh discipline ruled that out. Despite the hour of day, there seemed to be a kind of party going on. I was vaguely aware of doctors and nurses chatting and laughing.

Finally a doctor came to see me. The next thing I knew, my shirt-sleeve was being rolled up and a nurse was giving me an injection. That is the last thing I remember.

\* \* \*

I opened my eyes and for a moment figured I must be in heaven. An angelic face was above mine, looking down on me.

“Hello. Your name's Ian, right? My name is Rose-Ange and I am one of your nurses.”

“My God, what kind of trip was that – I feel wonderful,” I said raising myself off the pillow.

“Well, you were given a big dose of morphine down in Emergency so ...”, she broke off smiling.

“Hey man, you're lucky,” came a voice to my right. I turned my head and saw a young man about the same age as me. “My name's Raymond, now at least I don't feel so alone.”

I looked around. I was in a hospital room with four beds. The two beds opposite me were occupied by two very sick-looking old men. ‘He must be talking age difference’, I thought to myself as I reached out and shook his hand.

In the next few days I was visited by a succession of doctors. There were blood tests, urine tests, feces tests, more blood tests. Some examinations were carried out by anonymous white-coated visitors who I never saw again. I was X-rayed and given enemas to clear out the barium. One morning I was awoken and taken by two doctors into a nearby room where I was told briefly that I was going to be given a rectal examination. Next thing I knew, a long metal tube was shoved up my arsehole. The procedure was painful and unpleasant. I felt as if I had been violated. I felt as if my personhood had been reduced to a body-object that could be prodded and poked and invaded without permission. Again there was no explanation other than the name of the test – a sigmoidoscopy.

In general, what information I did get was short on facts and long on speculation. What was known was the following: symptoms of vomiting, high fever (it had been 104° on admittance), high

white blood count, severe headaches, convulsive pain in upper and lower abdomen, localized pain when pressure applied to lower right abdomen, tenderness in area of both kidneys, blood (casts and tubules) in urine. But there was no agreement on the cause of all this. I was visited by urologists, renologists, gastroenterologists, even the infectious disease people who asked me if I had ever been bitten by a rat. When I mentioned that I had visited Kenya, they gave me a malaria test for good measure. The more the tests came back negative, the more new tests were implemented. More blood tests, more X-rays – sinus X-rays, chest X-rays, renal X-rays that required a two hour scan of the kidneys using radioactive isotopes including mercury chloride and iodine.

One day, a team of doctors, students and nurses came in and performed a kidney biopsy. While I lay on my stomach, some kind of metal implement punched a hole in my right kidney and a small piece was extracted. A day later, it was decided they needed a larger piece so I underwent a second biopsy.

Meanwhile, I was feeling much better. In fact, I was feeling almost normal. My urine was no longer brown, the pain had subsided, and I had regained energy and strength. Despite the lack of any clear diagnosis, by the end of the first week, there was talk of discharging me. However, when I was given this information, I could feel an immediate reaction. I didn't feel ready to go. Within the hour, I had what they called a 'spiked fever' and my temperature shot up to 103°. Physically (and psychologically) I still felt vulnerable. On some deep level, I felt that the hospital was taking care of me. Not having the daily struggle to survive independently was healing in itself. I was meditating two or three times a day and one doctor took note of this. He told me that he approved and said he wouldn't be surprised if this was helping in the quick recovery from the worst of my symptoms.

At Queens University, I had been interested in the writings of the sociologist Irving Goffman and in particular his analysis of what he called 'total institutions'. I had done research in Toronto for another sociologist named Ian Weinberg who was completing a book on one kind of total institution. His book was entitled The English Public Schools: the sociology of elite education (Atherton, 1967)

A total institution was an independent social structure, a community unto itself. A prison was a total institution; so was an ocean liner. Sedbergh had been a total institution. A hospital, with its close-knit interdependencies was a kind of total institution too. In my outside life, I'd had no ready-made structures – I had to find them or create them one by one. Despite the unpleasant tests, I felt I had been granted an all-expenses trip to a spa resort. Meals were provided at regular intervals and young female nurses seemed pleased to assist me. In addition to Rose-Ange, my intake angel, there was another nurse assigned to my ward whose name was Susan Roe. Sue, in particular, seemed to like me, and I was beginning to get the feeling that she was physically attracted to me.

My young neighbor's name was Raymond La Page. Ray had been admitted with severe, bleeding stomach ulcers due, he said, to heavy drinking. His unfolding anecdotes were colorful to say the least. Originally from P.E.I., his father was head of the huge La Page Glue conglomerate. Although only 23 years old, Ray had seen a lot of life. In 1968, when he was only 18, he had gone down to Buffalo and had signed up with the U.S. Army. He had spent three years in Vietnam. In the year following his return to Canada, both parents had died.

Ray looked like a young Kirk Douglas – steely blue eyes, long blond hair swept back, a muscular taut body, and a type A personality. He told me he rode a 1500 cc Triumph and that he had been in a crash about a year previous, in which he had fractured his skull and injured his spine and neck.

He told me that he was currently 'going out' with Tina, a Trinidadian nurse that he had met at the Royal Vic. I knew what he meant by 'going out', I wasn't sure I knew what he meant by 'currently'. However, it got me thinking. The nurses weren't robots, nor were they angels. They were flesh and blood women. There was nothing to say that you couldn't flirt with the nurses. And I was beginning to

feel extremely horny. Rose-Ange was gorgeous but had a ring on her finger. She was off-limits. Sue, on the other hand, gave me the impression of being even hornier than me. I began to fantasize and wonder how I could apply Castaneda to the situation.

After my spiked fever, it was decided that I should stay put in hospital. The daily round of tests resumed. I had an arteriogram – a minor operation in which my pubic hair had to be shaved off. Sue performed this delicate procedure, and indicated not so subtly that she had noticed my arousal. A few hours later, the medical team arrived and I got to watch my guts on TV as a device with an inbuilt camera was inserted up one of my arteries. Further and further up it went, looking like a coat hanger on the screen. When it was deemed to be in position, a radioactive dye was injected and then I was wheeled off for X-rays. The result came back negative – nothing wrong with my heart or arteries. A few days later, it was decided that I should have a bone marrow biopsy – “to check for fungus”, I was told cryptically.

*Diary entry: January 1973*

*Thoughts after bone marrow biopsy:*

- ❖ *All these experiences in hospital are whetting my appetite to live life more fully. Like Castaneda says: ‘Have Death as your advisor’. Life is NOT about cerebral analysis – it is about eating, drinking, fucking, singing, dancing, working, playing ... and a healthy upkeep of body and mind.*
- ❖ *In the almost 2 weeks that I have been in hospital, one organ, thank God, has continually reminded me of its well-being.*
- ❖ *Being in hospital has made me aware of others’ problems – there’s always someone worse off than you. One of the old geezers opposite me wasn’t in his bed when I woke up this morning. “Where’s Mr. Tureen?” I asked. “He died in the night”, was the reply. That shook me up.*
- ❖ *Joy came to visit me yesterday. One of her ex-lovers is a doctor here. His name is John Borak. He told me the other day that he had helped get me get prompt treatment in the first few days by telling everybody that I was a ‘Cambridge Man’ from the U.K. I wasn’t impressed.*
- ❖ *I think I am going to make a move on Sue. Hell, what is there to lose?*

The next day, I passed Sue Roe in the corridor outside my room. I wasn’t deluding myself – there *was* a sexual tension between us. I quickly glanced around. There was no-one in sight. I brushed my hand briefly on her arm and whispered, “I know you want it ... why don’t we?” The response was immediate. Sue led me into an examination room, locked the door, and we ‘did it’ there and then.

It wasn’t just Sue. The truth was that I felt more connected to my immediate ‘community’ than I did to the few visitors that came to see me. My sister’s caring came across as worrying. It seemed to bother her when I said I didn’t want to see Carlos. She seemed worried about how I might be dependent on her once I was discharged. She also told me that the doctors had told her that I was in very bad shape when I was admitted. On my side, I felt that our paths had been diverging ever since I had quit the Masters program at the London School of Economics. I no longer felt part of her middle-class world. More troubling in many ways was the fact that I felt the same thing with Joy’s ex-husband Jim. I still liked Jim a lot but his life as a Philosophy Professor at Loyola University seemed cushy and safe. Whereas in London, he and Joy had seemed ‘radical’ compared to the conservatism of Sedbergh, now they seemed ‘liberal’. If the scaffold of society was seen as having walls, i.e. a house, then I had descended to the basement and had become increasingly intolerant of those on the upper floors who said they cared for those below them and yet had never spent any time in the basement. In some ways, they



seemed almost as bad as the landlord. The comparison of Churchill and Gandhi that had seared my conscience and made an indelible impression when I had read it at Sedbergh continued to influence how I saw others.

*'Churchill is the Byronic Napoleon. Political power is poetry to him. Gandhi was the sober saint to whom such power was anathema. The British aristocrat and the brown plebian were both conservatives, but Gandhi was a non-conformist conservative. As he grew older, Churchill became more Tory, Gandhi more revolutionary. Churchill loved social traditions. Gandhi smashed social barriers. Churchill mixed with every social class, but lived in his own. Gandhi lived with everybody. To Gandhi, the lowliest Indian was a child of God. To Churchill, all Indians were the pedestal for a throne. He would have died to keep England free, but tried to destroy those who wanted India free.'*

*(The Life of Mahatma Gandhi, by Louis Fischer, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1950, p. 263)*

Gandhi had renounced his middle-class heritage, as had Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. They were my heroes now – the ones who had made a self-sacrificing total commitment. The Maoist idea of 'revolving labor', of academics and artists working in the fields and in the factories made sense to me. I

viewed as suspect anyone who espoused the need for social change and yet felt they could do this without actually exiling themselves in the basement. How could they possibly know what it was like? My over-conscientiousness was leading me into an angry and zealous self-righteousness. If I had put my middle-class past on the phoenix altar of immolation, why couldn't they?

Within the hospital, I was daily seeing commitment to the cause of healing. That was clearly worthwhile – that was authentic. My sociology training had been all about separating the real from the unreal ('demystifying'). I needed to differentiate acceptable authority from unjust use and abuse of power. I had to separate authentic equality from sham democratic models – systems that retained and protected the social class perpetrators of property, privileged position, and laws of inheritance that inhibited any significant redistribution of wealth.

Sue was O.K. because she was a hard-working nurse. Apart from our sexual liaison, I respected her as a person, especially as she had begun to tell me about her plans to go to Nigeria as a nurse with C.U.S.O. She gave me credit for this idea. We had had several long discussions about political commitment, and she had begun to question her own comfortable middle-class existence.

But under my criticism of others was a relentless and ongoing self-criticism. I had wanted to be reborn in Canada as a basement-level immigrant. O.K. I'd achieved that. So what? Now what? Yes, I'd worked at 'proletarian' jobs like janitor, dishwasher, warehouseman, etc. Was that reason to be smug? Whether I liked it or not, Iain Anderson remained a yardstick for measuring ideological 'purity'. He had changed his job from proof-reader to cab-driver. Maybe I should become a cab-driver?

\* \* \*

I was discharged from the Royal Victoria Hospital on the 14<sup>th</sup>. January, 1973. The medical team had finally determined that I had Glomerulonephritis, a disease of the kidneys – in my case brought about, possibly, by a viral infection and accompanied by a 'f.u.o.' (a fever of unknown origin). As I said my round of goodbyes, I had memories of leaving Sedbergh. Most people were happy to escape. The 'total institution' had set limits on my chaotic outer world. Because of the protective 'garden fence'

(see *Chameleon*, p. 375), my world had, for a while, become simpler and safer. There had been a social context within which relationships could evolve and gain depth. It had been a world in which there was a clear-cut distinction of roles and status. It had been an 'asylum', as R.D. Laing would have it, where despite lots of unpleasant and possible unnecessary tests, my body had been taken care of, allowing both my body and mind an opportunity to heal. I was sorry to leave.

I looked in the mailbox outside 260 Carré St. Louis, and found several letters and cards addressed to me. Upstairs in my room, I read with a sense of black humor, a card from my mother, dated 29<sup>th</sup>. November, '72:

*With your wealth of carefree health  
You look complacently on crippling age  
And confidently assert  
"It cannot happen to me!"  
It might! How arrogant can you be?  
How unaware! Face reality – fight  
The enemy! Prepare, in time, a house  
A cozy nest – where loved ones care  
Where you can rest in comfort, to bear  
With fortitude the lonely trials of age.*

And then as a post-script, she wrote, 'it was your post-card of that bleak, single bedroom that made me think of this.' (I had sent her a post card with a picture by Van Gogh of his room in Arles).

'Well Mum, my health is no longer "carefree"', I thought to myself. 'I *have* gone through serious illness. It *has* happened to me, and it *has* been a humbling experience.' In fact, as I thought about it, my health had never been carefree. In the summer, I got terrible hay-fever. I had done my back and neck permanent damage through reckless fast-bowling in cricket. And then there were my teeth ... and my depressions ...

The only person that I really wanted to reach out to at that time was Françoise. I sat down and composed a letter to her. In it, I wrote:

*Sweet one, you are as much a part of me as I am of you. I remember the New Year in Grigny.  
Only one calendar year ago, yet it seems at least a decade. I remember the bicycle rides over  
bracken-covered hills. I remember playing frisbee on frozen ground. I remember the escargots  
in Lyon and the coffee in Vienne. I remember it all. And I grieve.*

## 5.

Shortly before I went into hospital, I had been accepted for the proof-reading job at Aquilla BST. I had worked there for a few days in December, and I knew I could return. In the mail, I had also received notification that I had been accepted for the 9 week Manpower sponsored French course, due to start in February. I wasn't excited about either prospect.

*Diary entry: 20/1/73 - Thoughts on returning from hospital.*

*When first I moved into my room, I wanted a retreat so I resisted getting a phone. Now, things feel different. The experience in the hospital has put me in touch with people and I don't want to go back to my monastic way of life.*

*I have been thinking about the possibility of going back to University as a way of putting some social structure and meaning back into my life. I've even been thinking of starting all over again and becoming a doctor! There was no inauthenticity about those stricken cardiac patients, or about the hard-working nurses and doctors. They were giving themselves to other human beings in need. That was much more tangible and less selfish than 'giving oneself to Art', as Carlos would have it.*

*When I talk to Sue about C.U.S.O., I feel I should go in a similar direction. Once again, making a commitment to teaching begins to loom large. Somewhere out there, in the field of education, lies my vocation ... somewhere out there, a voice is calling.*

The next day, I went to the McLennan library at McGill. I looked up the McGill course guide and discovered that someone called Paddy Hearsey offered a developmental drama course at summer school. I decided that once I got my phone, I would call her and set up an appointment.

A few days later, I returned to the proof-reading job at Aquilla BST. I'd been told that there was always lots of work there, and with my dental bills rising, I needed more than just rent and food income. As a result, I had decided to do the Aquilla job rather than starting up the Manpower-sponsored French course.

Whereas the hospital had been a place where Life and Death gained their proper perspective, the atmosphere of Aquilla, perched high above Montreal on an upper floor of Place Victoria, reminded me of Henry Miller's book The Air Conditioned Nightmare. I was back in a white-collar, middle-class milieu, inhabited for the main part by university-aged children of well-off WASP, Jewish and Italian parents. This was definitely not an environment of Need – other than 'needing' a toke or a coke. It didn't take long to register the most frequent expression, this being 'it's too much of a hassle'.

My first job was to proof-read long lists of place-names from the Recapitulation Sheet – Canada Elections Act. After the first day or two, I began to see why people disappeared for a toke from time to time. As I discovered, it didn't impede job effectiveness and more importantly, it lessened the crushing boredom of reading government documents. As I stared at the mound of paper in front of me, I could feel a certain humor creeping in. Had I been reading place names from Ontario or Alberta, it might have been different, but the Electoral District of Gander-Twillingsgate, Newfoundland contained such jewels as the following:

*Happy Adventure (238 electors)*

*Noggin Cove (166 electors)*

*Seldom Come By (273)*

*Joe Batt's Arm (236)*  
*Tilting (261)*  
*Whale's Gulch (143)*  
*Virgin Arm (264)*  
*Gayside (154)*  
*Notre Dame Junction (8) (!?)*  
*Leading Tickles (262)*  
*Lushe's Bight (79)*

You had to love it. The job wasn't so bad after all. It was, as Iain Anderson had said, an easy way to earn a living. And he would know, the fucking son of a C.I.O. turned 'socialist', whose daddy had paid for him to roam around Europe. (My suppressed rage at Anderson's betrayal with respect to Leley was beginning slowly to work its way out.)

After work, more often than not, I went over to Sue Roe's apartment in the McGill ghetto. Sue was good to me, almost too good. She made me meals, bought me cigarettes, offered me wine, and we continued to have sex. However, after the incredible naughtiness of doing it in the hospital, the thrill had subsided and I was finding that I liked Sue more as a friend than as a lover. I began to feel secretly relieved to know that she would most probably be going off to Nigeria in a few months.

Towards the end of January, I received a call from Professor Paddy Hearsey. She suggested that I meet her at The McGill Faculty Club.

It was a good meeting. She told me about her course and also gave me the name of a francophone colleague of hers – a Gisèle Barrette who ran a Masters Program in developmental drama. From what she said, I could/should consider one of two alternatives: doing a one year teacher's diploma at McGill, or a Master's (in French!) at L'Université de Montréal. For my part, I told her about Ed Berman and 'Inter-Action' in London. She seemed very interested. To my surprise, she bought me a 'whisky sour' – first one I've ever had, and I got the impression that she was interested in me for more than my pedagogical leanings. I was starting to realize that as a 26 year old, I was attractive to women in their thirties, and even early forties. Unfortunately, and foolishly, at the time they seemed far too old.

The next time I saw Paddy Hearsey, the setting was more formal, her office in the McGill Faculty of Education, close to the rugby pitch where I had played for Queens against McGill five years previous. As I wandered over that same turf in the campus above Sherbrooke, it seemed as if that day in 1967 had been in another lifetime. I was no longer an ex-pat. I was, and felt like, an immigrant.

The purpose of our meeting was to clarify whether or not I was going to apply for either her summer school course or the September admission into the Diploma program. At our previous meeting, she had suggested that I gain more teaching experience by being a substitute teacher for the P.S.B.G.M. (the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal). I had taken her advice and had subbed a couple of times. These experiences had reminded me that my ideals, motivation and raw talent for teaching did not compensate for my lack of experience. This, in turn, made me feel that it was too soon to go back to University. I needed money and I needed teaching experience. There were two ways that I could do that without having a teaching certificate; one was subbing in the school system, the other was teaching E.S.L. to adults. I had already been approached about doing the latter by one of Daniel Landau's colleagues at the Theatre Workshop, a woman called June Ozores.

As I was sitting on the john in the men's washroom, before our meeting, I pondered the graffiti on the wall above the toilet roll.

*'So you want to be a teacher? Well, remember what G.B. Shaw said about your kind:  
Those who can, do; those who can't, teach.'*

As I read these words, I realized just how deeply I disagreed with Shaw. His words were like a gauntlet being thrown down at my feet. I was neither acquainted with this quote nor even with this attitude.

My teachers at Sedbergh had been respected. Some of them had been revered. The teacher as 'renaissance man' was a more familiar concept to me than the teacher as failed 'do-er'. In my opinion, teaching was the highest craft one could learn, and one of the most worthwhile in terms of social benefit, certainly more valuable than a bloody Bloomsbury playwright! Shaw's words were provocative to my inner core, and it was almost as if they had been put there as a test, and as an omen. The calling was there, no doubt about it – it was just a question of when and how to answer it.

*Diary Entry: 2/2/73*

*Stoned insight at Aquilla:*

*The positive aspect of being empathetic is that it makes others feel that I am seeing and feeling who they are. The negative is that I can get 'sucked in'. By over-empathizing, I lose myself in the context of the other. Marijuana seems to help me focus on the other person without getting sucked in and losing my own perceptions. It helps me to stay objective. It helps me retain my ego boundaries. Basically it shifts me from a 'feeling' mode to a 'perceptive' mode.*

*For example, the other day at Sue's house, I asked her what kind of man she found attractive. What a pointless question other than to trigger potential vulnerabilities! Whatever she said, my ego was not going to be satisfied. She talked about strength of character, eyes, nice bum. I was beginning to get sucked in – letting her words magnify groundless (in this case!) insecurities. I was about to ask her if she thought I fitted her description, but at the last moment, I saw the 'comparison trap' I was setting for myself, and just in time, I jumped back. I immediately felt stronger.*

It was at Aquilla, during the month of February, that I became involved with a woman called Raphaela. The first thing I noticed about Raphaela was her listless, 'couldn't care less' attitude. The second thing (or maybe it was the first) was her haunting beauty and the fact that she didn't wear a bra. There was something about her that attracted me and repelled me at the same time. That alone made me curious. What was it about 'cool' people that attracted others, including me? Why did women love Leonard Cohen with his moody, studied mannerisms? Like Carlos, there was something about Cohen that set off an over-reaction in me. He seemed to accept and own his own self-absorption. Maybe that was it, maybe it was a lack of guilt or shame about 'doing your own thing' that triggered Sedbergh prescriptions against selfishness.

Raphaela set off my 'Blue Angel' syndrome. Like Marlene, there was a detached, unsmiling, frozen vulnerability that was the antithesis of the 'good girl' energy and ideals of Sue Roe. The thing was that much as I admired Sue, I found that there was a limited chemistry between us. Raphaela, on the other hand, fascinated me. She had long black hair, perfectly formed arched eyebrows, heavy lidded eyes, beautiful teeth, and a slim body. It wasn't long before we were having sex together. On some very basic level, Raphaela's nihilism was liberating. Her repeated statement "have my body but don't play with my mind" mirrored a growing sentiment within me.

*Diary Entry: 26<sup>th</sup>. February*

*Portrait of Raphaela: likes sex but too passive; escapism into drugs, books and movies; hates dogs; smokes a lot; favorite expressions – "it doesn't matter"*

*... "I don't mind"; generous with money and food; likes to sleep and has a vivid dream world; she speaks Italian, Spanish and French fluently; she says she likes my 'acute perceptiveness'.*

*The other day she asked me if I felt 'fatherly'. It was a strange question. I get the feeling that her own father is cold, distant, perhaps even abusive. Like Anais Nin, she needs her father's love, but in the absence of it, she turns inwards and rejects men. Books, drugs, dreams of far-off places become her world. But I sense her deep, repressed feelings. And then I start feeling like I did with Francoise – I want to take care of her, or is it that I want to 'help her'? I suppose she does evoke a kind of fatherly instinct in me, but also that of teacher and therapist. I want to help her to help herself.*

*Maybe I have an inner conflict between being 'nurturer/protector' and just allowing myself to be 'a lover', and nothing more. What is the distinction between protectiveness and possessiveness? Maybe what links the two is a deep-rooted need to assume responsibility for someone or something, not just to be taken care of, but to be care giver.*

*Diary Entry: 8<sup>th</sup>. March*

*Raphaela says to me, "you destroyed my cloak of cynicism" ... Raphaela with tears in her eyes ... she is grateful and resentful at one and the same time ... a deep pain surfaces and with it a self-protective anger ... spilling outward on a crest and heaving inward again ... happy and frustrated that he saw beyond her masks ... vulnerable that he had exposed her fear of not being able to express or communicate, he had discovered her sense of inadequacy at not being able to reach out to others, her numbness to feeling ... feelings, after all, were an indulgence ... she knew from bitter experience that if aroused, they would sweep her into abandoning herself ... she would have nothing left – not even her cynicism.*

*My relationship with Raphaela is nourished on sex, an event in which we both enact a primal battle to survive ... two wounded, lonely animals in a concrete jungle, with a bandage in one hand and a bowie knife in the other ... friend and foe circling each other.*

*Perhaps we are both terrified of being rejected or abandoned. We achieve moments of intimacy through sex but cannot eliminate the feelings that accompany it.*

*The other day, I sent her a letter saying that I felt we were bad for each other, that there was a destructive element in our relationship. Yesterday she gave me a written response at Aquila:*

*"Ian, forgive me for every fucking precipitous comment I've made that's turned you off me. I'm sorry for all I haven't said, partly because I've had difficulty identifying feelings that were new to me, partly because of inane fears that seem meaningless now that absence is the result. Perhaps it's only when confronted with emptiness (death?) that one realizes the futility of not giving and of not letting in, the stupidity of fears that prevent one from living, sharing, caring (as you've said so often). Only despair at a sense of loss can make me feel that anything I say can make a difference. I want you to know that you have made a difference to me. I kiss you, Raphaela."*

One day, Raphaela and I went to see 'Last Tango in Paris'. The anonymity of their love affair in which no names are given and no history in spoken appealed to both of us, and reminded me of Castaneda's lesson from Don Juan about 'erasing personal history'. But the controlling abusiveness of Paul, the American expatriate, left me cold.

I liked going to see movies with Raphaela. In the darkened movie theatre, we could achieve a different kind of intimacy than raw sex, a quiet and cozy being-together.

Raphaela had asked me if I wanted to see 'Women In Love' which was going to be shown at Sir George Williams University. The last time I had seen the movie had been with Ellie in London and it had evoked an impassioned discussion between us afterwards. I knew that some feminists, such as Kate Millett, had it in for D.H.Lawrence, just as others disliked Henry Miller and Anais Nin. I continued to feel that 'Women In Love' had penetrating insights into gender differences.

I agreed to go. After the movie, as we were walking out of the theatre on De Maisonneuve, I suggested going for a coffee to discuss the film. She agreed. Suddenly it occurred to me that we were only two blocks away from Carlos's mural. I felt seized by a fear of having to go through another episode of Carlos-adulation. I instinctively turned up Bishop before we got the vicinity of the mural. Raphaela said, "there aren't any coffee places this way, they're all that way," and she pointed down De Maisonneuve towards Crescent Street. What she said was true. As we approached the mural, I felt obliged to say, "have you seen the mural?" Raphaela looked up to where I was indicating. She paused, was clearly impressed, and said something about the strong vibrant colors. Then she said, "it's a masterpiece." Feeling like she was Gudrun and I was Gerald, I said, "do you really think so?" She said "yes".

I felt absolutely trapped and approaching the familiar black hole of identity-loss at high speed.

I had to escape. I grabbed her arm and said, "I'm going home."

"You are?" she says.

"Yes," I said, and start to cross the street.

And as I walked away, I saw myself clearly and indisputably as Gerald trudging through the snow to his self-destruction.

*Diary Entry: 15/5/73*

*Today I quit Aquilla. I have to find my own artist's identity. I have enough weeks to apply for U.I. benefits, and I want to resume writing my play, 'The Interview'. Everything is in flux. Sue has left for Nigeria. Raphaela is about to leave for California.*





## 6.

I was beginning to get better acquainted with the neighborhood around Carré St. Louis, in particular, Prince Arthur. I went on a regular basis to a restaurant and bakery called 'A Moveable Feast'. The place was run, or rather not run, by a group of hippies. The bread from the bakery was as good, as the service in the restaurant was bad. I would stop and have a cup of tea sometimes. Slowly I got to know the people there. Like the people at Aquilla, the waitresses were a flower child version of 'it's too much of a hassle'. What this meant was that they would be 'doing their own thing', which meant almost anything except 'waiting' – that was what the hapless customers had to do. However, there was one waitress who had caught my eye. Her name was Jennifer.

The first thing I noticed about Jennifer was that, in addition to wearing blue jeans, she wore work boots. She also smoked. She also had a kind of no-nonsense attitude that didn't seem middle-class. And, on top of all those proletarian attributes, she was the single mother of a 2 year-old child called Krista.

The attraction was not primarily physical. Jennifer looked a bit like Joni Mitchell; there was an avian alertness to the eyes, one that masked sensual or emotional nuance. From the waist up, she was graceful. Her breasts were pear-shaped, her arms and hands fine-boned and feminine. From the waist down, her build was heavier (although not fat) – this along with her height gave an androgynous aspect to her appearance. With her jeans, work boots and tough attitude, she could have been one of those women who direct traffic on highway construction projects. Her mind was nimble and she spoke quickly with a high nasal quality in her voice. She told me she came from Moncton, New Brunswick and although I hadn't met many Maritimers, those that I had met seemed to have a down-to-earth quality.

After a while, we exchanged phone numbers. Jennifer was working at Classics Bookstore and when I told her I was reading Castaneda, she told me she could get me books for free. This was another thing in her favor, given that ripping off large corporations was no longer on my list of ethical no-no's. I was grateful.

It was June. Sue had left for Nigeria. Raphaela had taken off for California. The Americans had finally left Vietnam, after killing two million civilians and one million soldiers. Krista's father had been just one of a massive influx of draft 'dodgers'. Most of the time that Jennifer was at the Moveable Feast, she had Krista with her. It was the first time I had seen a young woman of approximately my age in a maternal role. I was intrigued. At the same time, I was wary. It seemed as if Jennifer was coming on to me, and I was still dealing with my feelings towards Raphaela, to say nothing of the huge ache I felt when I thought of Françoise. I was also trying to apply some of what I had learned from Castaneda about not being too accessible.

I had settled into a writing routine. Every day I went to the Bibliothèque Nationale on St. Denis to do research for my play 'The Interview'. I had decided to set the play in Purgatory and have as one of the main characters, the archangel Michael. As a result I needed to learn more about both of these topics. The notion of purgatory as a kind of spiritual detention center fascinated me. The other two characters that had emerged were Josh (an autobiographical persona) and St. Peter.

Peter and Michael were developing into a contrast in authority figures. Whereas Peter was a liberal philanthropist who was prepared to overlook 'sins' as a missing-of-the-mark, Michael was a conservative zealot, a kind of hanging judge (who, in turn, was a kind of composite of my father and my Uncle Michael Argyle who had presided over the 'Oz' trial in London).

Meanwhile, I continued going to the Playwright's Workshop. June Ozores had given up on trying to seduce me and we had developed a casual friendship. During the early days of the summer, she had offered me a three day job teaching English to six Hydro Quebec employees in Ottawa. It had been a good experience. I had made a bit of money to help pay my dental expenses and I had gained more confidence as a teacher.

One day, I received two letters, both postmarked from Britain. One was from my mother, the other from Pam.

June, 1973: Letter from Mum:

*"I regret at times that I did not agree with Daddy and encourage you to go into one of the services. There, at least, you would have had a career, with good pay, leave, and a pension at the end of it. What are your prospects now? Without capital behind you, life can be very difficult."*

June 1973: Letter from Pam:

*"I hear that you have been rather ill. I'm sorry. I hope you are better and that life is once again full of love and laughter ... I am a student at The Drama Studio on Grange Road, London W5 ... I would like to hear from you".*

The first letter resulted in a dazed state of incredulity. How could my mother say this!? She had *begged* me not to go into the Army. I had taken her side in the stand-off between her and my father. Now, as I was struggling to make my own way, without help from either of them, she calmly and obtusely invalidated my efforts by saying that she (and I) had made a mistake. It was too much. I felt mind-fucked and betrayed.

As for Pam's letter, the cross-Atlantic nightmare was still much too vivid for me to entertain thoughts of Pam's reverse migration to London.

\* \* \*

It was mid-July and I was at Jennifer's house on Coloniale. I had been attending Gisèle Barrette's Summer School course in developmental drama at L'Université de Montréal. I had been there for over a week and had found it disturbing to be back in a university milieu.

Jennifer was making tea in the kitchen and Krista and I had just been watching Sesame Street on T.V. Compared to my monastic cell on Carré St. Louis, Jennifer's place was bursting with stimulating possibilities. In addition to Krista, there was Josh the loveable mutt, and Shawn the fecund feline who was well on the way to producing her second litter of the year. Krista and I would crawl around on all fours enticing Josh and Shawn into our games. I had started baby-sitting for Jennifer on occasion, usually for just an hour or two, and had enjoyed the experience.

My relationship with Jennifer had changed in other ways. We had started having sex a few weeks earlier and somewhat to my surprise, I had found her to be an active and uninhibited sex partner.

Jennifer brought in two cups of tea.

"I wish I could explain better what this course is about. Gisèle has video-tapes of our sessions. Could you come up to the University this week and watch them with me?" I asked, as we both lit up a cigarette.

“O.K, but I’m kind of busy.”

“It’s important to me.” I said, feeling prickly about her lack of enthusiasm.

The fact was that I needed some outside affirmation or support for having taken the bold, and possibly foolish step of returning to university.

A couple of days later, Jennifer appeared at my classroom just as the session was ending. Krista was with her, asleep in her stroller.

I was excited. I had tried to tell Jennifer about what Ed Berman had done with Inter-Action in London, and how I’d written to him, and how I wanted to set up something similar in Montreal.

As we watched the sense-awareness and body movement exercises, I scanned Jennifer’s face for signs of interest. Not seeing any, I could feel the prickliness turning to over-sensitive vulnerability.

“What do you think?” I said, pushing Jennifer to respond.

“I don’t know. It looks like it could be fun,” Jennifer said

“Fun?” I echoed, a chiding tone to my voice.

“Well yes, I mean it’s a new concept to me. I don’t really understand it. I’ve already told you, I never played much as a kid.” Jennifer sounded defensive.

Fair enough. Why did I get so irritated when someone else’s interest or enthusiasm didn’t live up to my expectations?

“Well, do you see now what I was saying about how this stuff could be applied to daycares and neighborhood community centers?”

“I suppose so ...”. Jennifer started unbuckling the safety strap on the stroller as Krista began stirring.

Again - a contradiction. Again - a flash of irritation. I was on edge and I knew why. The last week had brought back a flood of memories about L.S.E. Some of it was ‘if only’ fantasizing; if only Ellie had supported me instead of betraying me ... I might have completed the year ... I could have finished the program ... I would have got my Masters ... and now I might be working for U.N.E.S.C.O. ... I might still be the golden boy instead of an abject failure. I had cracked up in London. What a good expression! Yes, I had cracked up like Humpty Dumpty. I had pasted myself back together again but the shell was so fragile, the cracks were still showing. I yearned for someone to nurture me. Carlos had needed support but hadn’t given it. It seemed as if my sister was too pre-occupied with her work and her affairs. Raphaela had left. Sue had left. I couldn’t go through the frustrations and pressures of university again without support.

Suddenly something shifted and I knew I had crossed over the threshold back into the nightmare world of meaninglessness. I stood up and turned off the video.

“Oh shit, let’s forget it. Maybe I shouldn’t be doing the damned program in the first place. I’ve gotta sort this out by myself.”

“Look, I’m sorry if ...”, Jennifer started.

“No, no, this is my stuff,” I muttered. “Look, I have to stay here to do a couple of things. You go back with Krista. I’ll walk you to the bus stop.”

Later, that evening, I was flooded with terrible memories of the split from L.S.E. I lay on my bed, inert, sinking further into the vortex of despair. Whatever commitment I had had to teaching, or learning French, or developmental drama seemed to have vanished – just a dreadful, terrifying void.

On my desk lay a letter from Raphaela that I had received the day before. Maybe that was part of the problem. Maybe that was another reason why I had felt irritable towards Jennifer.

In the letter, Raphaela had written:

*“I am in Tuscon, Arizona. I really wish that you were here travelling along. I think we’d have good times drinking wine together and just seeing things, your perception of things being as acute as it is – I really miss it. You’ve had tremendous power over me. Love you truly.”*

What the hell was I doing with my life. Maybe my mother was right, not about the Army thing, but about the implied message that I'd screwed up my life. Maybe I should go out west and join up with Raphaela. Or maybe I should stick to Plan A and take my chauffeur's license so that I could drive a cab.

I had been unfair to Jennifer. I had expected too much of her. Besides, she had told me a little about the hardships of her childhood – her father dying when she was only two, her mother's neglect of her. "I was brought up in an emotional vacuum", is how she'd put it, "no anger, no love". Like me, Jennifer had needed to get away from her parental home. In her case, she shed her old skin when she moved from Moncton to Montreal. She changed her first name from Glenda to Jennifer and then, following an abrupt marriage when she got pregnant, there was a complete metamorphosis from Glenda Hutchinson to Jennifer Terry.

In fact, Jennifer had told me that she had amnesia about much of her childhood, and that she thought this had started after her mother had tried to smother her, following the death of her father. She had also shared with me that she had developed a tough exterior after several rejections by men. Jennifer wasn't afraid to lay it on the line; on the one hand she had said to me, "you make me feel real, Ian", and on the other, she had told me shortly after I met her, "don't get involved with me ... I destroy men". Given my quest to be a caring and supportive male, I took this as a challenge.

One thing I was sure about; I wanted and needed a piano. Jim had offered me his but I wasn't allowed one in my room in Carré St. Louis.

The next day, I quit the Université de Montréal program, still overwhelmed by the self-destructive memories of London. All thoughts of ever going back to University had gone up in smoke – and that included the one-year Teaching Diploma program at McGill.

I bought a newspaper and started checking out the housing vacancies. I needed to find a place so that I could have my piano. About a week later, I found what I was looking for. In a dilapidated building on Rue Napoléon, across from a Jewish bathhouse, I found a two room flat on the first floor for \$50 a month, only \$10 more than what I had been paying for my room.

\* \* \*

At the beginning of August, I moved in and a few days later, Louis Loveson, my old employer from the Montreal Piano Repair Shop, installed Jim's piano. For the fifteen or so months that I had been without a piano, a deep part of myself had been deprived of spiritual nourishment. Now I could meditate, do yoga, write, *and* play piano.

Things were looking up. Next thing on my list was getting my chauffeur's license.

My sister let me borrow her car and I took and passed my test in Verdun.

Then just as I was adjusting to the idea of starting up as a cab driver, I received a call from a Mrs. Dagenais at the Canada Manpower office. My first thought was an anxious concern that maybe they were going to cut me off U.I.C. for some reason. I went in to the office the next day, and to my surprise, I was told that there was a job opening for a music teacher in Newfoundland. Further, I was told that due to the strike that had shut down C.N.N.'s rail service, Manpower would pay my return airfare to Newfoundland so that I could attend an interview.

This had all come completely out of the blue. I didn't know what to think. There were several points to consider:

- (1) I was just settling down after two years of turbulence.
- (2) I didn't feel I had the experience or the confidence to manage a full-time, High School teacher's workload.

- (3) Given that I didn't have teacher training and the fact that I played piano by ear (and probably couldn't even read 'cello music anymore), I felt unqualified.

On the other hand:

- (1) The year and a half that I had spend in Montreal had been a rough ride and I had been thinking of escaping to the west coast. Maybe an escape to the east coast was an answer.
- (2) If I did the job, I would be 'rich' and able to pay all dental bills and maybe even buy a car.
- (3) Maybe I could jump-start my teaching career without having to return to University.

I looked at Mrs. Dagenais and said, "well I'll certainly think about it."

Mrs. Dagenais looked impatient. "Hey, why don't you go and make up your mind after you see what it's like. It's a free plane ride after all."

I thought for a moment and agreed. I couldn't argue with that logic. But I was curious.

"I'm surprised that Manpower is prepared to pay for me to go all that way."

"We're always happy to get rid of one more person," came the reply.

As I left the office, I pondered the many layers of meaning to what she had just said, getting rid of one more 'maudit anglais' being one of them (although perhaps this was too paranoid ... or was it?!)



## 7.

*Diary Entry: 29/8/73; Birch Hills Motel, Bay Roberts, Newfoundland*

*Last night, in Montreal, Jennifer calls me and then hangs up. I run around to her house. Jennifer talks about the stress of being a single mother, of how she is weary, of how sometimes she just wants to pack it in.*

*She has applied to Dawson College but she said she can't go if she doesn't get a grant and in order to get a grant, she must either be married or have separation papers. The latter is impossible because Ted is still waiting for immigration status to come through and that means she has to keep up the pose for his sake. She is being strangled by red tape.*

*Then she tells me she loves me. I am drawn into the sea of her vulnerability, as I was with Francoise.*

*On a lighter note, I have been told that the interview tomorrow in St. Johns is a formality and that in effect I have the job – which, by the way, is in a school five miles out of a town named ... wait for it ... Dildo!! I would accept the job just so that I could put my mailing address as:*

*Ian Brown*

*Dildo,*

*Newfoundland*

*Diary Entry: 31/8/73; Montreal*

*Boy oh boy! Where do I start?*

*Is Life imitating Art or what? Yesterday at the Interdenominational School Board Offices in St. Johns, I had 'THE INTERVIEW'. It started off as a 'mere formality' and ended up as an inquisition. There were three of them, one administrator and two Reverends. After a few brief questions they tell me that all I have to do is fill out the application form. We go through it together. Question 1 – name; question 2 – address; question 3 – age; question 4 – faith ... question 4 – faith ... O.K. ... so, being conscientious, I write down the truth, 'agnostic'. Suddenly, things ain't simple anymore.*

*REV #1: Now what exactly do you mean by 'agnostic', Mr. Brown?*

*IAB: Well, that there may be a God, but we can't know for sure.*

*REV #2: Can you tell us, Mr. Brown, were you baptized?*

*IAB: Yes, in St. Margaret's Chapel in Edinburgh by my grandfather who was an Army Chaplain.*

*REV #2: Was he indeed? Excellent. Protestant I take it?*

*IAB: Yes, I think so.*

*REV #1: And were you ever confirmed?*

*IAB: Yes, into the Presbyterian church at the age of 14.*

*REV #1: Were you? Well I don't think we have a problem, just put down Protestant or Presbyterian for question 4.*

*IAB: Well, I could but given how my ideas have changed over the years, it would be more honest to put 'agnostic'.*

REV #2: *To tell you the truth, Mr. Brown, we are not in the habit of hiring agnostics. Perhaps you could just put 'Christian', I am sure you have no objection to that..*

IAB: *Are you concerned that my religious views would influence my teaching.*

REV #1: *Well, that's about the sum of it, Mr. Brown. I mean being an agnostic is one thing, but how do we know you are not an atheist?*

IAB: *(getting indignant) I can't believe this. I am a teacher with a lot to offer. I am a teacher who puts the interests of his students above everything else.*

REV #2: *(adopting stern tone of voice) And we are an interdenominational school board that has to safeguard certain religious and moral principles.*

IAB: *I don't see why I should have to change 'agnostic' to anything else. And isn't it against the law of the land to discriminate on the basis of sex, creed or color?*

REV #2: *(fixing me with a baleful stare) Mr. Brown, you have to realize that to teach in Newfoundland is not a right but a privilege.*

IAB: *Look, why don't you ask me about what I believe in? I'll tell you.*

REV #1: *I don't think there's any need for that, Mr. Brown.*

*There was no answer for that. I left the office still refusing to change my answer to question number 4. The three board members told me that the matter would have to go to a full board meeting before any decision was made. To me it was clear that the decision had already been made.*

*Tonight I am staying at Jennifer's. Why? Because I was so certain that I would be doing the Newfoundland job that I had asked Jennifer, before I left, if she knew of anyone who would be interested in my flat. She found two people and when I called them a few hours ago, they said that they felt that they been given an assurance that they could move in and they were all packed ready to move on the next day, the first of the month.*

I could have insisted on getting my flat back. I should have. But the issue of the Newfoundland job had not been settled. I was furious about what had happened and wanted to fight for my rights. At the very least, I wanted to see what they would tell me, following the Board meeting. On the 5<sup>th</sup> September, I received a call from Reverend #1. He told me that the Board was impressed by my Resume but that as long as I stuck to 'agnostic', there would be no certification. Then he said I had agreed to put 'Christian'. I interrupted and told him that this was not the case. Reverend #1 said, "so I take it that you are not prepared to change your position?" I said "correct", to which he informed me that there would have to be a second Board meeting.

Given this ongoing battle, I decided not to get into further conflict over the matter of my flat on Napoléon. I continued to stay at Jennifer's and wait to hear from Newfoundland. Over a week went by and I heard nothing. Finally, on the 15<sup>th</sup>. I called the board offices and was told that a new teacher had been hired for the school in Dildo, and the matter was now resolved.

Not for me it wasn't. I got on the phone to the Legal Aid office determined to pursue legal channels. When I explained the situation, I was told that they were within their rights to refuse me the job. This was nine years before the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was enacted.



It was a bizarre situation. Several times Jennifer had suggested that I live with her and I had consistently turned down the offer. As I had got to know Jennifer better, I had seen how her contradictory aspects gave rise to a volatility that concerned me. Jennifer was insecure as a woman. She had told me that she didn't trust other women and that she easily got threatened or jealous. On the other hand, although she had warned me that she could 'destroy men', she had also described herself as 'a sexy saint' who was always rescuing men. And she had made it clear to me that she felt it was taboo to fuck around with other women's men.

But now, in the aftermath of the Newfoundland incident, I had given up my new home on Rue Napoléon, I was unemployed and I had Jennifer's house to myself for a week while she was visiting her mother in Moncton. Well, not quite to myself – I was in charge of Josh and Shawn while she was away.

What to do? Was this the time to move westwards? If so, where? Toronto? (at least I knew Frank there) Vancouver? To California to link up with Raphaela? All of these options seemed absurd given that I didn't have any money, was in the middle of a major course of dental treatment, and still had to attend three-monthly follow-ups at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

On the other hand, there *was* definitely a case to move away from Montreal. The newspapers were saying that the North American economy was in the worst recession for forty years. There just didn't seem to be any jobs, especially if you were an anglophone with inadequate French.

But I was sick of uprooting – really sick. I just wanted to settle down – know where my bed was for the night, have some neighbors, anchor my writing. Raphaela's situation couldn't have been more different than mine. She had never been out of Montreal before. She had been stifled by her roots. She needed to get away, whereas I was an immigrant desperately trying to establish some roots. For better or worse, I had wrenched myself away from my country, my culture, my class, my family, and the tightly-knit community of Sedbergh. The losses of successive 'homes' and key relationships had just added to the sense of being adrift.

However ... staying in Montreal was one thing, living with Jennifer was another. I knew I didn't want to get bogged down or trapped in a relationship with a woman in the way I felt I had with Francoise. I needed my independence.

Then in the middle of all this uncertainty. I saw a job ad. in the Montreal Star that looked promising. Dawson College had advertised positions for two 'Social Animators'. At first glance, I thought the job was for artists to do animated cartoons or graphics. But the ad. said *Social* Animator. When I read the ad. more closely, I saw that it stated:

*'We are looking for innovative people to work with students outside the classroom. We want stimulating, imaginative and creative people.'*

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that this wasn't just any old job, this sounded really interesting and right on the mark, in terms of my interests in community organizing, education and drama in particular. I sent in my Resumé and put a hold on further thoughts or plans of moving away from La Belle Province.

*Diary Entry: 23/9/73:*

*I met Jennifer at Dorval. It was good to see her and Krista. I've missed them. On the way into town, I told her about the Dawson job. I could tell that she was excited for me but that it was also hitting a raw nerve given that she had wanted to go to Dawson as a student this year but (1) hasn't been able to get a grant, (2) hasn't been able to get Krista into a daycare. I feel sorry for her. Anyway over a bottle of wine, I suggested that we have 'an arrangement' whereby I would move in, we would each have our own room, and we*

*agree to a three month trial until the end of the year. Jennifer agreed. We got Krista off to bed and made love.*

On the 27<sup>th</sup>. September, I was interviewed at Dawson College by the Head of the Student Services Department, a tall effervescent chap with ginger hair named Stewart McLean. He told me that 400 people had applied for the job and I had done well to even get to the first interview. Later, he told me that I would be asked to attend a second interview with four or five students as the interviewers.

A week later, in a state of rising expectations, I went to my second interview. I was told there was a big problem with student apathy at Dawson College, and that Social Animators were being hired to get students involved, to make things happen, to 'animate' a stagnant environment. I had checked the word 'animate' in the dictionary and noted the definition 'breathe life into'.

The interview seemed to be going well. There were no men of the cloth in positions of power, I wasn't being asked why I was an agnostic. When they outlined what they were looking for, I told them about what Ed Berman had done with Inter-Action in London – and how his projects had been set up initially to combat apathy amongst street kids. In particular I 'sold' them on the idea of street theatre and how I felt it could work at Dawson. They seemed enthusiastic.

A few days later, I got a call from Stewart McLean informing me that I had got one of the two positions, the other one going to an American draft-resistor from Texas, named Rodger Dillon. When he told me that the job paid \$100 a week, I almost flipped. \$100 a week! Wow.

*Diary Entry: 10/10/73*

*I got the job!! I'm rich. I want to get a present for Jennifer. I know she's interested in ankle bracelets and earrings. I would also love to buy her a weaving loom – she keeps talking about wanting to weave. And I want to get a horse for Krista!*

\* \* \*

There are some people that, while inspiring you, make you feel absolutely inadequate at the same time. One such person for me was Oscar Peterson. Whenever I started feeling that I was quite a good pianist, I would listen to Oscar and my ego would shrink to a singularity. I had the same feeling about Ed Berman.

Ed Berman was an American expatriate who came to London in the late sixties and, starting from scratch, organized community projects that went on to be extremely successful. He named his organization Inter-Action and it grew quickly over a few years to include separate yet inter-related projects such as Dagg's Troupe (interactional street theatre), the Ambiance Lunch Hour Theatre, the Fun Art Bus (a double-decker bus that picked people up and entertained them with puppet shows during the ride), and the Video Van (a mobile unit equipped with video cameras that facilitated youth video production).

Ed Berman was my hero. He was my mentor. Whereas the Young Vic Theatre (where I had worked prior to coming back to Canada) purported to be for the young people in the community, in reality it was elitist and had finished up turning away local youth as being too rough and tough for the genteel theatre-going clients. Ed Berman, on the other hand, *had* empowered youth in lower income areas. He had facilitated both channels of information and expression at a community level. He had motivated and inspired and above all, he had succeeded in evolving a business model that worked. He was working *within* the system to acquire funding for his projects any way he could, in particular by

tapping charitable organizations and municipal governments. In the sense of giving the tools of production to the dispossessed, he was a Marxist in my eyes. On the other hand, in his business capacity, he was a free enterpriser, a brash American go-getter who knew how to raise capital and where to apply it for social benefit.

I knew that Iain Anderson and his ilk regarded Berman as too middle-of-the-road and not political enough in the sense of directly challenging establishment views. But whereas guerilla street theatre groups seemed to have a very short life-span, InterAction had started in 1968 and looked likely to keep going and growing into the future.

During the summer, when I was doing the Summer School Course at L'Université de Montréal, I had finally got around to writing to Ed Berman to ask him to send me materials on Inter-Action's projects. In my mind, I wanted to set up a Montreal version of Inter-Action.

As it happened, I received a reply from Ed Berman one week after I started the job at Dawson College.

*Letter from Ed Berman: 15/10/73*

*Dear Ian Brown,*

*From your letter, I am sorry to think you have been lost to Great Britain. I am enclosing material on Inter-Action which I hope you will find useful. Perhaps we will meet sometime in the future.*

The letter accompanied a fat brown envelope full of information and press cuttings on Inter-Action's various projects. As I started my daily journey back and forth between Rue Coloniale and of Dawson College, I carried the precious envelope with me as a vital resource.

One paragraph summed up the philosophy of Inter-Action and at the same time showed how it was different to the approach taken by the Young Vic:

*'Drama not Theatre:*

*Although certain plays are performed for and by young people, **the main emphasis is on the educational and social aspects of the use of drama as a means of communication** – play is the thing. Often in this work, the artistic product (a 'play') is secondary to the involvement simply because **we deem creative involvement itself to be a major artistic product**. This type of work heightens an important difference between the main emphasis of our work and what youth theatre groups do. Obviously the work is complementary and both are necessary.' (my emphasis)*

\* \* \*

For the first time in my life, I had an office, one that I was to share with my co-animator, Rodger Dillon. It was located in Selby Campus. To get there, I took the Metro to Atwater, walked through the opulence of Westmount Square, and then descended the hill into the industrial and low-income housing area of St. Jacques.

My initiation to my job had been a two-day 'Humanistic Education' workshop. The workshop was big on 'communication', and 'self-esteem' and 'warm fuzzies', but short on the causes of de-humanizing education. However I met someone who I immediately singled out as being energetic,

committed and not politically naïve. His name was Martin Baker. He came up to me on the first day when we were told to pair off with someone and said “you look interesting, I’m with you”. ‘Hmm, nothing if not direct and assertive’, I thought to myself. It turned out that Martin’s parents were British, which made complete sense to me. In his aggressiveness he seemed North American; with his sensitivity and empathy, however he struck me more as British. It was a good start. I felt I had an ally. Martin was doing the Recreational Leadership Program, and was excited when I told him about my job as Social Animator and my plans to implement Inter-Action type projects.

A few days after the workshop, I had my first meeting with my boss, Stewart McLean.

“People take things too seriously,” announced Stewart as he looked at me with his twinkling eyes and impish expression.

“The way I see our role as animators is to initiate fun activities.”

As I listened to him, I started seeing him as one of Santa’s elves. All he needed was a cap with a bell and elfish moccasins with pointed-up toes.

“Halloween is only a couple of weeks away and I thought you and Rodger could set up some activities for the cafeteria. You know, something scary – ghosts, goblins, pumpkins ... things like that. We have a staff meeting on Friday. Perhaps you can bring your ideas to that meeting.”

I went away thinking ‘well I sold them on the idea of street theatre, so I need to think of something theatrical’.

## 8.

*The term 'Happening' was coined by New York artist Allan Kaprow in 1959 as a name for the anti-narrative theatrical pieces that he and such artists as Jim Dine, Red Grooms, Dick Higgins, Claes Oldenburg, and Robert Whitman staged in studios, galleries, and offbeat locations, usually with direct audience involvement. These multimedia performance events radically altered the conventional role of audience members, who, in the tradition of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, were assaulted by an array of auditory, visual, and physical phenomena (Guggenheim's Collection of Happenings – Glossary)*

I had read Brecht. I had read Artaud, and I had seen 'Happenings' in London. I had worked for Charles Marowitz at The Open Space. Of course! The Halloween event should be a Happening. Starting with the central theme of 'apathy at Dawson', I did a bit of research and discovered the College had been named after Sir William Dawson, an immigrant from Bonny Scotland, just like myself. My job as a social animator was to 'breathe life into'. As I thought about it, I made a link between 'breathing life into' and 'raising the spirit'. Suddenly, the purpose of the Happening became clear – to get student involvement to raise the spirit of Sir William Dawson. The form and content quickly followed:

- ❖ cafeteria lights are dimmed
- ❖ a gregorian chant begins to play over the PA system
- ❖ 4 figures in monk's hooded robes enter carrying a coffin
- ❖ the narrator announces the commencement of a mass séance to contact and then raise the spirit of Sir William from the coffin
- ❖ the crowd begin to chant 'rise Sir William rise', 'rise Sir William rise'.
- ❖ slowly the lid of the coffin moves, a hand appears, an arm appears, the lid comes off, and there is Sir William resurrected from his death-like apathy.

I got the College carpenter to make a coffin, enlisted Stewart McLean, Rodger Dillon and two others to be the pall bearers, borrowed some robes from the Drama Department, got a record of Gregorian chants from the music library, found a student willing enough (and light enough!) to be Sir William in the coffin, arranged to get some dry ice as a means of getting desired graveyard mist, and prepared my script as narrator.

The day came. The expectations were high. I was sure Stewart McLean would be happy because it was, everyone agreed, a 'fun' event. I was sure the apathetic student body would become involved and participate. The Happening happened. Everything went according to plan, except for one thing – the student body did *not* become animated to any appreciable extent. Granted, a few students chanted 'rise Sir William rise', but for the main part, people continued to play cards and pinball and pay scant attention to the dramatic spectacle.

Afterwards, Stewart McLean said, "well that was fun," but I could tell that both he and my fellow animator Rodger, were beginning to question just how 'off the wall' this guy Brown was. As to the Brechtian educative aspect having any lasting impact, forget it. Certainly, the cafeteria looked to have regained its familiar ambience of stagnation in the days that followed.

I felt crushed. I was well aware that years of sociological theory had made me into a 'system builder'. I talked a blue streak but hadn't yet found ways to successfully deliver the goods. The

Halloween Happening had just served to accentuate the issue of how to get willing student involvement on an ongoing basis. Ed Berman had started off with only a few actors who comprised Dogg's Troupe. In my case, those people would have to be students. I had it all worked out *in theory*. The Halloween Happening was supposed to have whetted everyone's appetite and in its aftermath, I was going to set up 'Bill's Troupe' (named in honor of Sir William). Now, as I contemplated what felt like a disaster, I quaked at the prospect of not being able to attract students to my street theatre group. Carlos's expression flashed through my mind: "first you have to announce to the world you are an artist, then you have to prove it". I had announced that I was going to breathe life into the very nooks and crannies of Selby campus, and my first attempt had failed miserably.

I discussed my problems with Jennifer.

"Maybe I can attract students by advertising in the student newspaper," I said one evening over supper.

"Yes, but what's the hook?" replied Jennifer. "You're not going to be paying them. What about trying to arrange for them to get credit?"

"That's a good idea," I said, perking up, "but how?"

That question got answered after I spoke with an instructor called Marie Crosson who was the head of an innovative arts program entitled 'Reflections'. Marie welcomed the proposal and said that it could probably be offered as an 'independent studies' course under the auspices of the 'Reflections' program. What this meant was, subject to her final approval, I would have a juicy carrot to dangle as incentive.

*Diary Entry: 5/11/73*

*Today I put the first Bill's Troupe ad. in 'The Bull'. It read as follows:*

*'Bill's Troupe – Street Theatre:*

*The Spirit seeks to inform, express and problem-solve. If you are interested in the relation between Drama and Live Communication, and/or Politics, and/or Therapy, then contact Ian, Room 1100, Selby Campus.'*

Over the next week, I had three students show interest. One said she was interested in drama, another in politics, and the third in therapy. Hmm ... had I cast the net too widely? More questions, more dilemmas.

In the midst of this unsettling period, I met an interesting member of the Humanities Faculty. I had seen an advertisement in the Bull that read as follows:

*'Visit to the Imperial Tobacco Factory to see what real work is like.'*

*Meet with Paul Hoch in the lobby at 11.30. Wednesday.'*

Phew! *There* was someone who knew how to animate me, at any rate. I wasn't available at that time, but I looked up Paul Hoch's number on the Faculty Phone List, and left a brief message at his local. A few days later, he returned my call and we arranged to meet in the Cafeteria.

It turned out that Paul Hoch was the resident Radical on campus. The first connection was made when he heard that I had attended L.S.E.

"Well, that's a coincidence," he said. "I was at L.S.E. in '68. I was doing a second Ph.D. there. Then I got involved in the '68 student uprising. The authorities threw the book at me. In the end, I was deported back to the States. Then I wrote The Natives Are Restless, about what happened at L.S.E. which got published and gained me more notoriety. Then I heard about a job opening here, and well,

here I am. I was glad to get out of the States.”

I was impressed. I had someone I could talk to, someone more or less on the same wavelength. Over the next couple weeks, we got together on several occasions, including hanging out at bars. Paul Hoch was a large muscular man with long shoulder-length hair. He was erudite, articulate, and appeared committed to a socialist agenda. He taught a course at Dawson entitled ‘Sexism and Racism’, which in itself gave him bragging rights to being a beacon of political correctness. I established credibility with him by telling him of both my experiences working in warehouses and factories, and the evolution of my own attraction to Marxist ideas. When I told him of my disappointment over the Halloween Happening, and my uncertainties over how to get students involved in social action, he told me that I should organize a bear-pit debate and invite student leaders, faculty members like himself, and above all, the President, Paul Gallagher. We discussed how the debate could raise the systemic causes of student apathy and expose the key issues. When I suggested a few possible titles for the debate, Paul Hoch dismissed them as being too tame.

“Why don’t you call the debate, ‘Dawson is an Open Prison’? He said, without a trace of a smile. Phew ... this guy wasn’t kidding around!

It was with some trepidation that I made an appointment to see Paul Gallagher with the intention of inviting him to participate in the debate. But the President of Dawson College seemed to take it all in stride and immediately agreed. I was impressed by both Pauls and eagerly approached the other participants in the debate. It was ‘a go’; the date was set for the 12<sup>th</sup>. December.

In the interim period, I continued my attempts to mobilize ‘Bill’s Troupe’.

*Diary Entry: 19/11/73*

*Put second Bill’s Troupe ad. in The Bull today. It read:*

*‘Bill’s Troupe – WANTED. More people who can improvise for Street Theatre Group (also people who are funny, angry, lunatics or egomaniacs, and anyone who can handle maracas, tambourines, etc.) Little demand on time and energy. Enormous possibilities for various kinds of involvement, e.g. video-tape, community development, developmental drama, etc.’*

A few days later, I met with Marie Crosson again and she gave me final approval for ‘Bill’s Troupe’ being offered as a credit course. This led to the final, and most direct ad. in The Bull.

*22/11/73: Bill’s Troupe: what the hell is Bill’s Troupe anyway? It is a street theatre group named after Sir William Dawson, whose spirit lives on. Starting in January, it will be offering credit to those interested in developmental drama (development of inner resources) and guerilla theatre (development of political awareness) – and there is a connection between the two. If you are interested, contact Ian, Room 1100 (S)*

*Diary Entry: 7/12/73*

*Today we had a big Student Services meeting. I had been dreading it because of possible interrogation about my first ‘Social Animator’s Report’ which I had handed out a few days ago. Not that I’d said anything controversial in the Report itself. It had been on a theoretical level and sought to answer the question ‘Why apathy?’*

*I was never worried about the theory. I felt I could theorize with the best of them. It was questions about whether I was delivering in practice that concerned me. I felt I was under a microscope and that the weight of lifting student apathy was on the shoulders of the Animation team.*

*As it turned out, there was an air of suspended judgment regarding my Report. On the other hand, I got into a sizeable confrontation with Stewart McLean over his proposal to allocate a proportion of the budget to subsidize students going to the Winter Carnival in Quebec City. I brought up the fact that I knew someone (i.e. Jennifer) who had been unable to attend Dawson because there were no child-care facilities and no financial support for single mothers. It was Stewart's 'fun' model of animation versus my 'need' model.*

*These people have lived such sheltered lives!! They just don't 'see' the problems that some people have.*

\* \* \*

The day of The Great Debate came. There had been some discussion about whether holding the debate in the cafeteria was an unacceptable intrusion. However, I had covered myself by formally seeking permission from SAC – the Student Activities Committee of Selby Campus. The tables were in place, the microphones and sound equipment set up. All that remained was the entry of the gladiators.

Around 12.30, at the height of the lunch hour crush, the debate got underway.

Gallagher opened with a clever gambit in that he argued that Dawson *was* an open prison in the sense that there was freedom within restraints. Hoch responded by saying that Dawson was a prison because you were compelled to be there due to the fact that: (1) there were no jobs out there, so “Dawson keeps you off the job market for a few years”, (2) without ‘a ticket’ you wouldn’t get a half-decent job anyway. To paraphrase him: ‘power is in the hands of the corporations, the governments that represent them, and the College administrators who between them, conspire to make learning an experience of cramming and regurgitation in order to get a good grade and first class ticket.’

Gallagher said it was just untrue that anyone was compelled to be at Dawson, that there were real opportunities for students’ participation and meaningful learning *if* students were prepared to take responsibility, and that if someone didn’t like the ‘freedom within restraint’ of Dawson, they could go elsewhere.

Hoch went to his heavy guns and counterattacked by saying that “the place is set up to socialize and limit and dehumanize people so that they will be able to function on the job market”, and that student participation and ‘parity’ on committees was “phony because the real decisions were still made in back rooms.” He added that there was no-where else to go.

None of the speakers denied that there was rampant student apathy. Martin Baker said that it made him sick but that it wasn’t the students’ fault, but rather the fault of the College for not supplying the necessary structures, especially in view of the fact that Dawson had expanded from 1800 students to 8000 students in only three years.

A member of student government went a step further and raised the temperature by saying he “personally put the blame on the students”, that he was “disgusted and had lost faith in Dawson and in the students”. As he put it, “they spend their time playing cards in the cafeteria, they smoke dope openly, and they throw their cigarettes onto the carpet and burn holes in it .... it’s not worth working for them, they don’t give a shit.”

One of the card-playing students on the cafeteria floor was provoked enough at this to point out that unlike the speakers on the stage, the cafeteria was the only place the average student had to go and in any case, what was wrong about “a cafeteria where students and staff come to eat, exchange a few pleasantries, and play a few games”. After all, he concluded, “a few dimes jingling on the table don’t



make as much noise as you all up there.” He then went further on the offensive by saying that Technology students like himself were “abused in the sense that they have to take 4 Humanities and 4 English courses in order to get their ticket.”

This was too much for Paul Hoch who countered, “the things that go on in this cafeteria make me absolutely sick. You profoundly insult me when you insist on turning this place into a gambling casino. I think you should set up your own day-care center somewhere else and not make me into your Obaby-sitter.”

Then a sociology instructor named Steven Schechter weighed in with a lengthy and articulate speech. He took exception to the argument that students were irresponsible (which in different ways had been presented by Gallagher, Hoch and the member of student government). He went back to the idea first presented by Hoch, and later agreed to by Gallagher, that there were no better alternatives. As he put it: “what about the student who is working at a shitty job during the day, has a family to support, and on top of that has six or seven courses to do in the evening? Students are not irresponsible. ‘Getting a ticket’ is what they’ve been taught to do at home and at school all their lives.”

With things beginning to wind down, Gallagher said: “we need to go from individual freedoms to collective responsibility, not making the damned distinctions between administrator, faculty and student. The answer is not at the level of Quebec society or Canadian society. Let’s not start with the world. Let’s change ourselves and let’s change our immediate community, and the base community we have at this College is the classroom.”

And in a final show of solidarity, Hoch and Schechter rebutted Gallagher by making the point that the solution lay in resisting the pressure of exams and grading and preparation for the job market and beginning to fight the institutions that impose that definition of learning. Hoch put it bluntly, “you can’t have an island of participation in a sea of dictatorship.” Schechter re-emphasized the sociological perspective that you have to change structures before you can expect people to change attitude or behavior. As he put it, ‘the real crime is that for every student here, there are so many people who are their age who are out manning machines and lathes in factories and working in crummy offices, and, on top of all that, have been taught that they are responsible for their own failure.’”

Had the debate been a success? Certainly more of a success than the Halloween Happening. It had stirred some energy. It had achieved some degree of animation of staff and students. How did I feel about what had been said? Did I think that Dawson was an open prison?

There was no simple answer. On the one hand, I had learned at Sedbergh about the extraordinary degree to which human resources could be developed – the capacity to overcome obstacles was so much greater than the average person believed. On the other hand, I had learned that states of poverty and deprivation in which there was *anomie*, or lack of structure, could act as a cancer that slowly but surely eroded hope, belief, esteem and will. On the face of it, Sedbergh was much more of a prison than Dawson, and a closed prison at that. However, if the structure of the two institutions was seen in terms of rooms in a mansion, Sedbergh had many more rooms which in turn, gave many more opportunities for growth and fulfillment of potential. The apathy that I encountered at Dawson was little different from the apathy I had encountered at Queens University or Aquilla for that matter. The human resources of interest, motivation, will power, courage, skill had been stunted by the lack of challenge and superficial experience founded on consumerism, whether TV and movies, junk food, drugs, or mindless travel.

There was also much confusion over the meaning of words like ‘participation’ and ‘community’. At Sedbergh there had been a high degree of participation. It was expected and it was demanded. You *had to* take a cold bath every morning, meaning everybody from the most senior to the most junior. Sedbergh was not a ‘participatory democracy’ where everyone had an equal vote, but it was a structure that presented equal challenges to everybody, and one that had an intricate system of rewards

and punishments. The structure of Dawson did not have challenges or rewards or punishments other than course work and the resulting grades. Sedbergh challenged the total person. Dawson and Queens challenged only the mind.

Sedbergh WAS a community, actually a set of overlapping communities. Powell House had been a community of which I was a member. Sedbergh School had been a community of which I gradually became a part as a member of school teams, the school orchestra, and the school academic community. The community had traditions and a long history that was rich in meaning. Dawson, like the province and nation of which it was a part, was a youngster. The debate at Dawson was, in one sense, a discussion of what kind of structure should be built in the first place. The debate that was needed at Sedbergh was how to reform outmoded structures, or in a radical sense, whether such a school could exist at all in a classless society where material wealth was shared equally.

Sedbergh could be described as a participatory autocracy, one which facilitated both competition and cooperation. And it was a 24-7 *total* institution. There was no diversion or competing interest. Dawson, on the other hand, was designed solely as an academic institution. What much of the debate discussion had centered around was whether the function of Dawson should be 'getting the ticket' or being 'a place of learning'.

## 9.

Early on in my relationship with Jennifer, she had said to me, “no man has ever given our relationship a chance.” That sentiment continued to echo through me. An underlying current in all my relationships with women was a conscientious drive to atone for the sins of my father and previous generations of patriarchal males. Jennifer’s remark served to sensitize the guilt trigger still further.

On the one hand, I had moved in with her with the clearly stated intention of having my own bedroom and in so doing, being a flat mate rather than ‘a partner’. On the other hand, the emotional aspect of our relationship was becoming more complex due to factors such as our ongoing physical intimacy, our shared struggle to survive, and my growing paternal role with respect to Krista. I was becoming part of Jennifer’s family whether I liked it or not. And every time I repeated my need to be independent and reminded Jennifer that we had an understanding by which I would stay until May of 1974, I would get hooked by feelings of guilt. I didn’t want to be added to Jennifer’s list of transient, uncaring men.

Despite her vulnerabilities, Jennifer was beginning to feel empowerment due to the Women’s movement. We *were* in the midst of a profound cultural revolution. In 1972 the Equal Rights Amendment had been passed. It stated: ‘*Equality of Rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or any State on the basis of sex.*’ I cheered. In 1973 The Supreme Court of the United States legalized abortion in the Roe vs Wade Case. With Françoise’s traumatic abortion still fresh in my mind, I didn’t know whether to cheer or not. Rationally, I gave a thumbs up; morally, I was uneasy.

In my sphere, the main impact of the women’s movement was being felt through written material. Most women I knew had read Doris Lessing’s The Golden Notebook. Some, like Ellie and Lesley, had read first wave feminists like Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. In 1970, three of the most influential books by women had been published; Sexual Politics by Kate Millett, Dialectic of Sex by Shulamith Firestone, and The Female Eunuch by Germaine Greer. I had read Greer’s book and I loved her outspokenness. She was reveling in a female power that I had always wished my mother would claim.

Jennifer’s favorite book was Sisterhood is Powerful by Robin Morgan. In my perception, ‘sisterhood’ was more a wish than a fact. I didn’t see either Jennifer or Joy bonding with other women. I did see a lot of distrust and continued focus on relationships with men. But the problem was being identified and addressed. Women were reaching out to each other in solidarity. For me as a man, it felt like the reverse was happening. My previously unshakable trust in men had been undermined. I wasn’t sure who I could trust any more.

As several women were prepared to admit to me a decade later, ‘it was not a good time to be a man’, let alone a white man with a middle-class background. Didn’t I know it! In London, I had written a long rhyming story entitled ‘The Man Who Wanted To Experience Everything’, in which the protagonist tried to escape his overwhelming feelings of guilt by changing class, country, color and gender (and losing his sanity in the process). The conscientious boy from Edinburgh felt he was doing his best. I had re-written my script and I had renounced my class, I had changed my country, I had denied myself privileged opportunities, I had worked at the most degrading jobs, and I had lived on the barest of a survival income for years. I had not changed my color (I always felt I was a re-incarnated black man anyway). And I had not changed my gender. Even if I could have, I had no wish to. I was attracted to women, certainly more so than macho North American males. I liked being a man.

As much as I liked the empowerment being gained by women, I increasingly disliked the way in which the male image was being distorted. Bobby Riggs was not a fair representation of all white males, as far as I was concerned. Alan Alda was sensitive and intelligent – I liked that. But the attitude that Clint Eastwood was a redneck just because he played a cowboy in spaghetti westerns seemed to me to be a distorted overreaction. In 1973, when Warren Farrell came out with The Liberated Man, I began to realize that white male guilt was not just something that I felt – it was an endemic part of the ongoing cultural revolution. And when Jack Litewka's essay 'The Socialized Penis' was published, I got really concerned. His basic idea was that men develop erections because of thoughts of domination and conquest, so the only 'good' sex begins with a soft penis.

The archdevil of white males was, of course, Richard Milhouse Nixon. 1973 had also been the year of Watergate. Patriarchy had never before worn such an ugly face.

The gay movement was also a key part of the cultural revolution, and its numbers were swelling rapidly. Jennifer's best friend, Howard, was gay and out of the closet. I really liked Howard. I understood how women like Jennifer were increasingly forming alliances with gay men. Howard was liberated in his emotional and sexual behavior. It was easy to talk to him. It was easy to be intimate with him.

Christmas 1973 came and went. I bought Jennifer a pair of black leather boots, which I thought she would really like. She didn't. She told me that there were two things wrong with them: (1) they were black rather than brown, (2) they weren't Frye boots. At least she was honest about it. A bit later, I bought her a weaving loom, which she did really like and started to use immediately.

Things were beginning to look up for Jennifer. She was starting up as a part-time student at Dawson and had registered for a Sociology course with Steven Schechter. Even more significantly, Krista had been accepted by a daycare, 'Garderie Centre St. Louis'.

One day in January, Jennifer asked me if I could attend a meeting at the daycare and bring Krista home afterwards. I agreed. The job at Dawson was becoming increasingly stressful and I was glad to get out of there at the end of the day. I took the Metro and bus to St. Joseph Boulevard. The meeting and subsequent trip back with Krista made a big impression on me, which I recorded in my diary in the form of a letter to Jennifer (which I showed her later).

*Diary Entry: 21/1/74*

*Dear Jennifer,*

*Today has been a learning experience for me. Maybe it was the freezing rain and black ice that heightened the experience but today's experience with Krista gave me an insight into the work and energy that it takes to look after a child, day after day. It's easy for me to play with Krista, which is what I usually do. Why not? It's fun for both of us. This was different. This was work.*

*No wonder you watch soap operas on the TV, crave chocolate, and soothe your nerves with Rita Coolidge. There is a little, vulnerable human being who is utterly dependent on you for care and protection.*

*It felt like an accomplishment getting Krista home without falling on the ice; then, dealing with the poo-poo, changing the diapers, feeding her, dealing with a major tantrum at one point, and finally – and thankfully getting her to bed and after many stories, to sleep. I went through to the living room and collapsed on the sofa.*

*I understand a little better the need for sleep, space for yourself, and for security and stability for both of you. Truly ... truly, man has not understood the nature and significance of the woman's role in parenting.*

*Now, as I wait for you to come back from your work, I recall the other day when I came back from Dawson, exhausted and discouraged, and said to you (and not for the first time), "I wish you showed more interest in my work – I had a hell of a day".*

*Forgive me for my insensitivity at times. Dear, sweet Jennifer, I feel for you and with you. When I was at the meeting, there was such a wonderful atmosphere of mutual need, and shared trust. And when I was there, I could think seriously of what you brought up the other day, i.e. having a baby and sharing a home together. I too would love to have more stability in my life. I just wonder if I am up to the challenge of bringing up children. It certainly puts a new perspective on priorities - how to reconcile work responsibilities with domestic commitment.*

*Soon I will hear the sound of your key in the front door. I will rise to greet you and say, "darling, sit down and relax while I bring you a cup of tea, your pipe and your slippers." Or maybe I won't. Maybe I'll be 'selfish', allow myself my own tiredness, and greet you from the sofa. It wouldn't be a crime.*

*And it is all so political – as usual. What gives time and energy in our society? What buys freedom and relaxation? Money. If you've got the green stuff, you can have your child taken off your hands by a private daycare or a Malaysian nanny. if you don't have money, like us, there is a choice: either fight tooth and claw to get it, or seek people power – their warmth, support, solidarity and commitment to helping each other. That's what we've done and that's what I felt today at Centre St. Louis.*

*Oh, I think I hear you coming. One cup of tea coming up.*

\* \* \*

I probably carried some of this enthusiasm for 'people power' into the first ever meeting of 'Bill's Troupe' the next day. Whatever the case, I did not handle things well.

During December and into January, I had gradually received responses to my ads and had ended up with seven students who seemed interested and prepared to make a commitment. The meeting was at the house of one of the students. Things got off to a bad start when one student arrived late and two others didn't show up at all. I had bought six large bottles of Labatt's 50 to 'facilitate' discussion. In my attempts to create a 'humanistic ed.' atmosphere, a student-centered group, and a participatory democracy, I had decided on a 'hey guys, I'm not really a teacher, I'm one of you' approach. In a further error in leadership, I did not object when somebody produced a joint and then compounded that mistake by participating in a ritual toke.

Over the Christmas break, I had prepared various hand-outs. I distributed these and then yakked on about developmental drama and street theatre. By the end of the evening, I could tell I had scored a few points for originality and flexibility, but at the same time had raised doubts about how our group was going to function.

I was concerned. Maybe I had initiated something that I didn't know how to control. One thing was for sure; these kids were just that – they were nineteen year olds, fresh out of High School. They needed direction, and mine had neither been clear enough or strong enough. I had treated them like they were graduate students in Sociology. All those years of immersion in social systems had made me top heavy with theoretical ideas and underweight when it came having the skill and experience to know how to implement them.

I felt I had a good plan. Instead of 'the street', we would utilize the lobby and other key locations within the Selby Campus building. I wanted to back up the presentation with music, so I had hit on the idea of designing a stage on wheels, one that would be large enough to have an upright piano on it and still allow the space necessary for three or four performers. The only way that was possible was to have two smaller units that could simply and easily be attached and unattached. I talked to the campus carpenter and he said it could be done but not until the end of February. Another delay – more uncertainty.

Meanwhile, I heard through the grapevine that 'higher authorities' felt that the animation experiment had failed and that neither Rodger nor I would be re-hired when our contracts expired at the end of April.

In the end, I had to admit that 'Bill's Troupe' had not worked out as planned. In the month of February, two members of the group dropped out. The stage was finally delivered as promised. I got hold of an old piano and we did use the stage three or four times before the end of the semester. The most significant time was when we organized a 'happening' in the lobby in support of the fledgling Dawson 'Single Mothers Group'. Jennifer and Krista were there. Paul Hoch and Steven Schechter gave speeches. Other participants included Rosalie Rumanek, leader of the Dawson 'Women's Group' and two representatives from 'La Ligue Socialiste Ouvriers'.

For my part, I was experiencing an acceleration of my views on political activism. My contacts with Hoch and Schechter was certainly one factor. On the 4<sup>th</sup>. February 1974, Patty Hearst (heiress to the Hearst Newspaper fortune) was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army. A month later, Paul Hoch confided with me that he was a friend of Jack Scott, a journalist who was involved with the case in as much as he had apparently provided a safe house for Patty Hearst's captors. Hoch then told me that he had been questioned by the R.C.M.P. and that he thought his phone was being tapped. In April, the T.V. stations showed clips of 'Tanya' (Patty Hearst) taking part in a bank hold-up.

Meanwhile, in March, Jonathon Kozol, the radical educator from Boston who had written Death At An Early Age, came to Dawson as a speaker. On one level, the experience was like a master class in how to animate. This guy was so incendiary that he vaporized any apathy within fifty feet of him. Kozol, a small, slight man, electrified the large audience. He spoke in a deep, resonant, but strangely hushed voice, as he mercilessly attacked the United States' public school system. His arguments were coherent and persuasive. Like Hoch and Schechter in the debate, he said that there was little point tinkering with the educational system when the larger social system needed to be changed. He advocated setting up a parallel educational system based on 'free schools'. Such was the energy that was stirred up that by the end of the meeting there were calls from several speakers to 'DO SOMETHING' at Dawson. In the wake of Kozol's visit, a Radical Education Caucus was set up.

I was deeply affected by Kozol. He became a role model and a mentor.

Also, during this period, I was introduced to Saul Alinsky's Rules For Radicals, Paulo Freire's Pedagogy Of The Oppressed, and other radical educators like John Holt, George Dennison and Paul Goodman. One day, Jennifer returned from her sociology class with Steven Schechter with a slim volume entitled Poverty In Montreal. It had been written by a Dawson student, Evelyn Puxley, and had been published by Dawson Press. This little book simply and clearly laid out the connections between poverty and (a) malnourishment, (b) intellectual retardation, and (c) emotional problems stemming from broken families and various forms of abuse. I quoted extensively from her book in a letter that I wrote to the student newspaper in March. Knowing that I probably was not going to be rehired, I poured out my frustrations in this letter:

*Extracts from letter to the Editor of The Plant, 7/3/74:*

*Here in the Selby sarcophagus of remote Dawson City on the Anglosonic island of Montreal, student bodies sleep soundly, rising only to take an occasional class, smoke an occasional joint, or else organize some harmless fun to help release steam and energy before dozing off again. Those who are at least half-awake, jump the sinking ship and take off for greener pastures like the New School or Mosaic, or else they make plans for the big 'get-away-from-it-all' trip.*

*Yes, Kerouac is still with us it seems. 'Tripping' is still the big motivator. How to get off the island and where to go – that is the vexing question. Miami at Christmas? Europe for the summer? Vancouver for next year? The grass is greener elsewhere so let's become an easy rider on the road, tripping away – anything so as not to have to face the deadly realities of now and here.*

*The reality is not only of an anglophone minority with no common identity. It is also one of exploitation, class-struggle, poverty, ignorance and injustice. You don't have to go half way across the world on Daddy's money to experience that reality – it's right here on our doorstep:*

*"In the City of Montreal:*

- ❖ 38% of the population is impoverished*
- ❖ only 35% of Quebec's labor force is unionized*
- ❖ the present Quebec curriculum is not designed to make students aware of the social, political and economic realities of their province*
- ❖ a group of doctors in the St. Jacques district studied 311 children attending 7 schools in this area between September and December 1969; 105 of those children were malnourished, 97 were retarded in weight and growth, 84 had psycho-motor retardation, 153 had emotional problems, 48 had eyesight problems, and 18 had strabism."*  
*(see pages 11-14, Poverty in Montreal, E. Puxley, Dawson Press, 1971)*

*Puxley's conclusion? "The child from a low income home who is denied adequate food, health care, and intellectual and sensory stimulation enters school with physical and psychological handicaps." So much for equal opportunity!*

*We are left confused as to what to do. There is a challenge, no doubt about that. There is a challenge to the Administration to leave their planning boards for Dawson's future, and to listen real hard to the rumblings and grumblings coming from the present Dawson. There is a challenge for the teachers to listen real hard to what students want to be taught. There is a challenge to Student Government to make the student body understand who they are, what they stand for, and how they can represent student needs and interests. And there is a challenge to students to express and demand the kind of education and representation they want.*

*Personally, I am sick of the dishonesty and deviousness that seems to breed here ... the overly nice liberal fear of stepping on people's toes, the reluctance to criticize or confront.*

*We need to get enough aware people together (whether teachers, staff or students) so as to be able to produce a noise that will be heard.*

*Ian Brown, Animator, Selby.*

By the end of March, I knew that neither Rodger nor I were going to be re-hired. A decision had been made to collapse the two social animator positions into one 'community facilitator' position.

My job at Dawson ended on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Rodger and I were both given a token interview for the community facilitator job but we had both been informed unofficially that neither of us would get the job. I felt disappointed and angry. Having been given power and opportunity to *do* something, it felt like the bailiffs had just been sent in to take possession of my livelihood.

One aspect of my commitment to the Dawson job had been to root myself in the community, not just of Selby but of the surrounding area of St. Jacques. As always, the Gandhi maxim of 'living with the people' guided my thinking. Reading Saul Alinsky's book on how to become a successful community organizer had just reinforced this view. How could I really be an agent of social change if I parachuted in from some other community? All the people I admired – Gandhi, Berman, Chavez, Kozol, Alinsky – they all talked about the importance of living in the community in which you worked. I resolved that being laid off wasn't going to deprive me of the opportunity to continue my involvement with Dawson College.

Diary entry: 6/4/74

- ❖ *I will continue the fight by remaining within the Dawson context.*
- ❖ *If I have to, I will enroll as a student so as to have legitimate status.*
- ❖ *I will find a place to live in the Selby area.*
- ❖ *I will consolidate and further develop relationships with Hoch, Schechter, and groups such as Cafébec, Centre St. Louis, and the Radical Education Caucus.*
- ❖ *I will continue to operate within the spheres of social animation, educational reform, and political action.*
- ❖ *I will seek to develop my ethical and political beliefs and endeavor to commit these to involved action*
- ❖ *Goodbye alienation, isolation, introspection, self-pity, defeatism, impotent anger, bottled-up rage – the fight is on!*

Gradually, the anger and the resolutions subsided as I settled into my new, unemployed daily rhythm of taking Krista to the daycare every morning. I began to get to know some of the people and how the daycare operated.

The daycare had previously been funded through the Federal Local Initiatives Program. However the funds were cut off, putting its existence in jeopardy. By the time I became involved, the daycare was being run by a small group of parents who were Maoists in their political orientation. The significance of this hit me one day as I attended a mass demonstration in support of Dr. Henry Morgenthauer, the outspoken physician who advocated free abortions. At the demonstration, the kids from the daycare were prompted to sing solidarity songs and chant slogans that had been drilled into them by the monitors and rehearsed for weeks beforehand. It alarmed me to see little three and four year-olds adopting rigid attitudes and behavior around issues that they didn't begin to understand. They were being used as political pawns. Again my mind turned to Ed Berman and Inter-Action. His projects were for all ages, including pre-schoolers. That was what these kids needed, not regimented brain-washing. As I watched the kids strutting around chanting the slogans, they looked like mini storm-troopers, and once again I was reminded that there was fascism of the left as well as of the right. I began contemplating how and when to approach the parents and monitors with a proposal for music and developmental drama activities.

Meanwhile, as I started up the process of applying for Unemployed Insurance once again, I could feel confusion and despair beginning to reassert themselves. I wrote this poem in my diary.



*Ghosts of former selves haunt me  
Reminding me of the untimely deaths  
Of former projects and commitments.  
They turn me in circles  
Until I am blind from dizziness  
They haunt me with their endless questions  
'Who are you now, Chameleon?'  
'What do you want to be?'  
Questions that echo through  
The catacombs of my soul  
Questions that spiral downwards  
Until rebuffed by an answering whisper  
'Leave me alone'  
And as they dissolve into the darkness  
I hear their hollow laughter  
'But you are alone, you are alone'  
And I am left on a rocky shore  
Crying to the sea and to the stars  
'Don't leave me alone'*

Despite my aching need to feel that I was a part of some community, that I was part of 'the solution' rather than part of the problem, in my heart of hearts, I knew that I would not return to Dawson. In both the cases of Dawson and the daycare, Jennifer's influence was paramount. She had legitimate status at the daycare due to being Krista's bona fide mother. I was a quasi-father and only to the extent that I continued to live with Jennifer. And she had just gained legitimate status at Dawson by being accepted into the two year Social Work Diploma program. She now had more contact with people like Steven Schechter than I did.

Once again, thoughts of returning to University rushed in to help fill the vacuum. The University of Montreal was now off my list, but the idea of doing a teacher's diploma was still alive, as was a new option – doing an M.A. in Educational Studies at Sir George Williams University. I had seen an advertisement for the program in the newspaper. It said that students could specialize in one of three options, these being philosophy of education, history of education, educational problems. It went on to say; 'areas of concern will include the education of immigrants and minorities; moral, social and political education; aesthetic education; curriculum and school organization.'

The words that resonated within me were, 'educational problems', 'and moral, social and political education'. I made inquiries and ended up being given an appointment to see the head of the program, a Dr. John Harrison, towards the end of May.

When I met him, we talked for a long time. I liked him. He was an older man who reminded me in some ways of a former mentor, Hamish Blair-Cunynghame. He was intelligent, a good listener, and not trapped in a portion of his frontal cortex like so many academics. I could tell that he liked me and was intrigued by some of my ideas. He encouraged me to apply for the program and I told him I would give it more consideration.

But after the previous eight months of praxis, returning to theoretical bondage in the ivory tower seemed like a cop-out.

I had been talking with Jennifer about setting up an Information Centre with vital survival information (on housing, legal services, community resources, cheap consumer products, etc.) for those on a low income. However, I could see that Jennifer's commitment was increasingly focussing on getting a Dawson 'ticket'.

What to do? Drive a cab? Pay the rent by being a substitute teacher? Try to make an income from writing?



## 10.

It was a long, hot, humid summer. The construction work for the '76 Olympics accelerated in pace as many people contemplated the irrelevance of the upcoming extravaganza to their daily lives.

One day, in a spontaneous and defiant gesture, I cut off my mustache and beard. The symbolism was, perhaps, along the line of 'I will show my face to the world, I will not disappear into the shadows.'

My involvement at Centre St. Louis Daycare had increased from taking Krista every morning to working there two days a week. That was when I met Michou. In fact, what happened was our eyes met and a connection was made. The attraction immediately set off inner conflict.

The value of loyalty was so important to me that I was terminally monogamous by nature. However, like everyone else, the inner conflict involved three parts of my being: (1) 'natural' attraction, (2) values, (3) reason. It was #3 that really complicated things.

If it was a simple slugfest between 'desire' in the red corner, and 'conscience' in the blue, then in my case there was no contest. I mean 'desire' would put up a good fight, but ultimately 'conscience' always turned out to be the heavier puncher. 'Reason' complicated things because first of all it involved two aspects. There was the reasoning of the times. The reasoning of liberal minded people in the sixties and seventies was that sex was good, monogamy was unnatural and nuclear families were suspect. Often I felt out of step with 'the times', perhaps stubbornly so. But in this case, I was on board. Based on the experience of my own family and most of the families and couples that I'd seen, my own innate reasoning told me that monogamy did not work.

The thing was that in my relationships with men, neither sexual nor emotional involvement was part of the minefield of loyalty/protection/boundaries/possessiveness/jealousy. I could have several friends, have an emotional bond with each one, while still remaining loyal on both an individual and group level. But with women, it was different. I didn't like the way in which the 'reasoning of the times' glossed over the vulnerability and pain that came from physical and emotional rejection. What I really wanted was a world in which there was emotional monogamy but sexual license – for both men and women.

However from my limited experience, it seemed that this could not work unless sexual contact with the non-partner was anonymous. In my fantasy, there would be masked balls where once in a while, you could get it off with no strings attached. I understood why people sought to resolve this conflict by either having a secret lover, or going to prostitutes, or 'travelling' as a discreet way to have sexual encounters. But a secret lover was not going to work for me, because honesty and openness were as important to me as loyalty; and travelling and prostitutes required considerable disposable income and still didn't negate the need for honesty and loyalty if you had a partner.

Michou was from the Iles De La Magdalene in the Gaspé. She was slim and fine-boned, with calm, intelligent eyes, a translucent complexion and the kind of light blonde hair that made brunettes feel inadequate. Over the summer, we began to talk and the attraction grew stronger.

Following the Newfoundland fiasco, my arrangement with Jennifer had been to co-habit until the Spring. This had got extended to August. I resolved not to get involved with Michou as long as I was living with Jennifer. At the same time, I had another motive for becoming independent again.

\* \* \*

Letter from Robin: 12/6/74::

*“After some investigation, I finally traced Françoise to 9 Clissold Road, Stoke Newington, N. 16. She, I am sad to say, has gone entirely to seed and looked an awful mess, totally negative, dirty, unkempt, and living in a large condemned house in a row of the same. They say variety is the spice of life, but I sometimes wonder what some individuals do to themselves in their search for their own particular brand of truth.”*

*“Dad is now in a really bad state with gangrene poisoning in his toes and spreading. He’s totally blind now and has no fire left. He sits there quietly and peacefully awaiting the inevitable. Mum is a marvel and although she broke her arm at Xmas in a fall on Blackford Hill, she is back driving the car and carting him to hospital (which they both attend daily).”*

*“In two weeks I will be flying back to South Africa to be with Lorna, an unmarried mother of a 5 year old.”*

A while later, I received a letter from my mother in which she said: “Robin was sacked from his job in London. He badly needs dental treatment and has lost his spectacles. It would have been better for him to come home to Edinburgh for a while until he got himself sorted out.”

On reflection, Robin’s situation in South Africa was not so different from mine. We had both had catastrophic break-ups (and break-downs). We were both emotional refugees living in another country. And we were both living with a single mother. There was much ‘sorting-out’ to do for both of us. Two things were for sure: (1) it wasn’t going to happen quickly, (2) it certainly wasn’t going to happen in Edinburgh.

I hadn’t heard from Françoise for quite a while, and every time I thought about her, I felt pangs of guilt. Robin’s comments about her “going to seed” just heightened my feelings that I had abandoned her.

During the summer months, I received letters from Pam.

Letter from Pam: 23/7/74

*“I was sad and hurt when you blocked my attempts to re-establish contact, so I was very glad to get this letter. As you said, we don’t know each other at all. You sound as if you are in a fog, and judging by this and your last letter, not a very healthy one. I’m sorry.”*

Pam’s letter was sent from Scotland where she was studying drama at Sterling University. One of the reasons that I had blocked her was because her letters from the U.K. sparked off an electrical fire-storm of cultural schizophrenia. It was just too close to home. For example:

*“It’s very satisfying being back in Scotland. It gives me a sense of accomplishment and I feel very at home here, but there is no getting away from the fact that I am Canadian and I miss Canada enormously sometimes. I don’t make good friends very easily, and I miss being around people who have the same background as me. The people I’m most attracted to are the ones who have traveled at least as much as I have. I find that people here don’t travel much, are rather set in their ways and lack a certain breadth of experience.”*

*“In a way, I lack a sense of belonging anywhere, and the more I move around, the more acute that feeling becomes. However if and when I ‘settle down’, it will be in Canada.”*

It was clear to me from this letter that I was not the only mid-Atlantic person, struggling with issues of personal and cultural identity.

I also received two letters from Ellie:

*25/7/74; Extract:*

*"it's very odd, I have been travelling and sleeping with a man - sometimes I think he's you. I look up from my pillow and there are your eyes – it's like what you said, 'you are as near to me as someone I met yesterday', 'an unstructured space where time does not exist.'"*

*Late August, 1974; Extracts:*

*"Hello dear man,*

*I am sitting in my boudoire with the garden quivering outside the windows, and a lame cat with a poultice on one of its hind legs pacing along the sill. Sunday night, bank holiday weekend, quiet enough to hear the train rattling in its roofless tunnel two streets away. The cat steps along the keyboard – your piano – and makes a limping music – now he's settled next to the birdcage."*

*"In summer I live on the raft of a bed in the downstairs bedroom, washed with shadows and green light, from the plants outside. In winter I live on my Moroccan rug upstairs next to the coal stove. I love my house – its order and disorder that creates itself in it. I learn from it. It's almost a perfect fit for me. So I'm leaving! Moving back to Canada when I finish the film I'm working on now. Vancouver probably."*

*"You sound good and real. I liked you in your letter. You were made to be gay and play the piano, make love, make jokes, make theories; and there you are, sad and lonely and yet afraid to say so. You've been oddly present to me in the last month, partly the coincidence of your first card and the long-eyed man who now plays your piano (although not so well). Also the total eclipse of Roy – at last – from my mythology raises memories I had to store away for a while."*

*"I've dropped out of my Ph.D.; couldn't pay the fees, didn't really want to; couldn't play, and HATED the academic games, despised the people who live on it, and myself too. Have been very poor, living on National Assistance and various moonlighting jobs (domestic cleaning, gardening, modeling at an art school); have good times, and really desperate times with Luke, who is bright, very beautiful, independent, full of fantasy, but also wild and bratty, too aware of his own charm, a bit devious like his father."*

*"Have periodically been very lonely and am still a toboggan of elation and grief."*

*"Haven't quite repaired Roy's wanton damage."*

*"Every once in a while, find a book that electrifies me. The Poetics of Space by Bachelard, The Dialectic of Sex by Firestone, or a film: 'Nathalie Granger' by Marguerite Duras, 'Monterey Hotel' by Chantele Ackerman."*

*"Over the past year, have taught myself, with some help, the technology of film-making, while making two little films and working on a big one called 'Natural Light'. I love making films, the whole slow process of conception, shooting taking sound, editing, contact with labs, technical talk with other film-makers. However, male film-makers still patronize me and there aren't many women, and they're snobbish. The prestige and competition and self-advertisement of film 'artists' makes me sad and sick."*

*"In my studying and thinking and speculating, I sometimes remember you, when at last I understand something you used to say. Taking my time!"*

*Write soon, Ellie*

Part of me hated Ellie for her betrayal in London, but overall her extraordinary intelligence, sensibility, and inner strength continued to evoke my admiration whether I liked it or not.

The main event of the summer was being invited to Martin Baker's wedding in Toronto. I had got to know Martin better after the 'Dawson Is An Open Prison' debate. We had so much in common, he felt like a soul brother. He had met and fallen head over heels in love with a woman called Jina who came from an Italian-Canadian family in Toronto. When I met her, she reminded me of Lesley. She was bright, sexy and seemed to adore Martin. There was a crackling energy between the two of them. The wedding and reception were a real celebration and helped pull me out of my doldrums.

Back in Montreal, I resumed my work at Centre St. Louis. After seeing the sparks between Martin and Jina, I saw more clearly that Jennifer and I didn't have that kind of chemistry. Michou, was a different matter. I had told Michou how isolated I felt as an anglophone immigrant in Quebec, and how I wanted to become more assimilated into francophone culture. Even though Michou spoke flawless English, the language of the Daycare centre was French and I tried to speak French with her as much as possible. The sexual tension between us was palpable and I knew it was only a matter of time before something happened. But not while I was with Jennifer. As long as we were co-habiting, I would be loyal to Jennifer.

The academic year was looming. Jennifer was about to commence studies as a full-time student at Dawson. I had started receiving U.I. payments in June, and had been told that I had worked long enough so as to qualify for the maximum term. This meant that I had the comforting prospect of receiving payments as late as the following March. At least I was able to feel sheltered by a degree of financial security.

I had a plan for what I wanted to do in the Fall. My ex brother-in-law, Jim, had suggested that I meet a former student of his called Allan Handel. He had been freelancing with C.B.C. Radio and when I met him, he advised me to meet with a producer to discuss the possibility of submitting a proposal. There were two programs that he had in mind; one was titled 'Concern' and the other 'Ideas'. I started listening to both programs and formulating ideas for a proposal.

At the beginning of September, I met with a C.B.C. producer named Percival Tallman. I had prepared a three page proposal for a single 'Concern' program. The gist of the proposal was: (1) to look at the evolution of social animation programs in Canada as a response to apathy and powerlessness, (2) to investigate the relative success of these programs, (3) to look at the role of social animator and the way in which attitudes and values influence, and are influenced by the work, (4) to raise contentious issues like, (a) does social animation act as a depressant to social change (i.e. band-aids to the symptoms of the problem rather than a means of attacking the root causes of the problem), OR does it act as a *stimulant* through instigating and organizing collective expression and action? (b) do social animators act in the true interests of the people that they are working with? Do they represent their target population, or have they been 'parachuted' into the community to work 'on' a problem, rather than 'with' the people?

We had a wide-ranging discussion at the end of which Mr. Tallman said that he would submit my proposal to C.B.C. headquarters in Toronto. He also told me that he thought I had lots of good ideas and his recommendation was that I write a second longer, 3 or 5 program proposal for 'Ideas'. A week later, I heard from him that the 'Concern' proposal had been turned down. I turned my attention to a second proposal.

It took me a month, but by the end of September, I had put together an eight-page proposal. The title of the thematically linked programs was 'Look in, Look out'. Picking up on the central topic of the 'Dawson Is An Open Prison' debate, the title referred to whether proponents of social change should put their focus on the individual or on social structures. As a vivid example, I quoted from an article in 'The Montreal Star' (21/9/74) entitled 'U.S. Radical hiding in Canada'.

*Stephen Bingham left no doubt that he favored a total re-structuring of American society and that his thinking had evolved into clear-cut Marxism-Leninism. 'People may think', he said, 'that I've gotten into mysticism like Rennie Davis (the anti-war activist who now is a devotee of Guru Maharaji), or am quietly living out my life. In fact, the opposite has happened.*

The proposed five programs were as follows:

#1: 'The Good, The Bad, and The Confused':

What are values? Where do they come from? How do they change? What is the difference in values between the rich, the middle-class, the poor? What are core, traditional Canadian values? Why is there such confusion of values at present? What are some of the ways in which people are searching for answers to this confusion? Is it possible, or even desirable, for professionals such as teachers, journalists, therapists, to be 'value-free'?

In order to answer these questions, suggested interviews were with (a) Lewis Mumford who had written books like The Conduct Of Life and Values For Survival (in which he describes himself as a democrat with socialist sympathies, and a religious humanist in the tradition of Emerson and Whitman), (b) Noam Chomsky who had written American Power and The New Mandarins, which was an indictment of politically inactive or hypocritical liberal intellectuals.

#2: 'The Artist: Free to be Responsible?':

Should the artist be reflecting confusion in values by showing the symptoms or by revealing the root causes? Or is 'should' a word that shouldn't enter the artist's vocabulary?

One intention of this program would be to look at the confusion of values between the 'Art-for-Art's-Sake' school and the 'Art-as-an-Instrument-of-Change' school.

The program would look at Theatre of The Absurd ('Look In'), epitomized by Beckett and Ionesco, as opposed to the political, didactic theatre ('Look Out') of Brecht, and present day Brechtians such as Lindsay Anderson ('If', 'O Lucky Man').

#3: 'The Teacher: A Guide to Values, or a Preacher of Values?':

What should the role of the teacher be with respect to the transmission and shaping of values? This program would make key reference to Jonathon Kozol who argues passionately for the need to have, and to express one's moral values. In an article entitled, 'Will The Real Helen Keller Please Stand Up?', Kozol points out that although the 4<sup>th</sup>. grade textbooks say, 'in every respect, Helen Keller represented courage, perseverance, and the highest moral values of her day', it does not say how she put these values into action. As Kozol says:

*"she is de-vitalized and de-politicized from the person who wrote, 'the foundation of this social order is laid on a basis of anguish and exploitation' to the standard, low-key, glazed and boring Helen Keller whom 2 million children know and read about every year in school."*

*The program would look at the current confrontation between 'Humanistic Education' ('Look In' – value clarification, communication skills, self-actualization) and the advocates of 'political education' ('Look Out')*

*Interview would be with humanistic educators such as Paul Gallagher and radical educators such as Paul Hoch, both at Dawson College.*

#4: 'The Psychiatrist and The Anti-Psychiatrist':

The profession of psychiatry has been criticized as having a middle-class bias. Thomas Szasz, author of The Myth of Mental Illness, raises the question, "what is the difference between social nonconformity and mental illness?" Who's mad? Society or the individual?

What has the influence of anti-psychiatrists, such as Szasz, Laing and Cooper, been in Canada? What should the psychiatrist's role be? What is the psychiatrist's interpretation of patients' confusion of values? Do psychiatrists ever encourage their patients to 'look out'?

#5: 'The Organizer, The Activator and The Animator':

In the words of the late Robert Kennedy, Cesar Chavez – leader of California's migrant grape-pickers – is "one of the heroic figures of our time." Chavez's teacher and mentor for ten years was Saul Alinsky, the self-termed 'professional radical' who Jacques Maritain, the French philosopher, called "one of the few really great men of this century."

This program would look at the ideas of these two men and the influence they have had in the Social Work profession and amongst political activists. What were the values they looked into and found? What were the values they looked out at and wanted to change?

Interviews would be held with representatives from the Women's Center of Montreal, G.M.A.P. (Greater Montreal Anti-Poverty Program), the N.F.B.'s 'Challenge for Change' Program, the United Farm Worker's Chapter in Montreal, and C.Y.C. (The Company of Young Canadians).

From 'The Conclusion'

The basic theme of all the programs is 'confusion of values'. This refers to people's difficulty in distinguishing between right and wrong, in society and in themselves. Notions of good and evil, right and wrong, have been relativized almost to the point of meaninglessness. If democratic choice (including institutional priorities) is to be meaningful, it must rest on a bedrock of clear values. In terms of institutional spending, where should the priority lie – in funding programs for individual change or social change?

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, things had deteriorated between Jennifer and I. She had felt very insecure about my trip to Toronto. In addition, there had been a parent meeting at the daycare following which she had told me that she had seen the way Michou had looked at me. She was aware of the attraction. From my side, I felt resentful for at least a couple of reasons. I had given a lot of time and energy to supporting both Krista and Jennifer (especially with respect to her course work at Dawson). On an interpersonal level, I had felt that Jennifer needed a punching bag to work out some of her negative feelings towards men. For a year, I had willingly absorbed a lot of stuff, but now I was growing weary of my role. Years later, Jennifer said to me, "I couldn't believe how much crap you put up with".

I needed two things as far as Jennifer was concerned:

- (1) to keep my emotional bond of friendship with her intact,
- (2) to move out and find my own place.



## 11.

Ten days after I submitted the proposal to C.B.C., I heard that it had been rejected. My immediate response was to re-activate the long considered plan of travelling out west, stopping to stay with Frank in Hamilton, then on to Calgary and Martin and Jina, and eventually Vancouver. But when I called Frank to discuss my plans, he intimated that while the idea was “cool” with him, he wasn’t so sure about his partner, Cathy. That changed everything. I needed to feel a certain minimum level of security in order to set off on an unknown journey with no job and little money. The day after I spoke to Frank, I saw a ‘for rent’ sign on St. Dominique, a block away from Jennifer’s place. It was a run-down flat in terrible condition, but the rent was only \$69 / month for a ground floor and basement and the building was detached and bordered by parking lots which meant it was ideal as far as my piano was concerned – no worries about neighbor complaints. After sleeping on it, I decided that staying in Montreal was my best course of action and that same day I signed a one-year lease.

I wanted to have as smooth a transition as possible between moving out of Jennifer’s place and into the flat on St. Dominique. To this end, I decided to move a few boxes every day and to bring Krista over on a regular basis to watch me paint.

It took three weeks to make the place habitable. There were rats to be trapped, armies of cockroaches to be exterminated, waves of congealed grease to be dissolved with ‘Vim’, and layers of filthy linoleum to be removed. I put three coats of white latex paint on the walls, three coats of red oil-based paint on the basement floor, and three coats of yellow semi-gloss on the cupboards. The floors upstairs required steel-wool scrubbing, washing and waxing. The hard work made the wrench away from Jennifer easier. I continued to spend time at her place, to help her with her Dawson course work, and to look after Krista. It was also decided that I take Jennifer’s dog, Josh. I loved dogs and had formed a strong bond with Josh. Given Jennifer’s full-time commitment at Dawson and my unemployed ‘freedom’, it made sense that I take him. Josh also relieved the loneliness of being on my own again.

I had been receiving Unemployment checks for over five months and I was getting anxious about being cut off. I saw the following as my job options:

- (1) freelance work (e.g. try another Proposal to C.B.C. – 3<sup>rd</sup>. time lucky?)
- (2) substitute teaching with the Protestant or Catholic School Board
- (3) nude modeling for art classes (if Ellie could do it in London, I could do it in Montreal)
- (4) piano teaching
- (5) piano performing?
- (6) driving a cab

I wasn’t excited about #1, having invested so much time already on two rejected proposals. I was dubious about #2 due to insecure feelings about teaching adolescents as well as the shitty work conditions (being called at 7 a.m., having to get to a school in some God forsaken spot, and then getting paid only \$25 for an eight hour day).

Modeling was something that I had considered but had never had the information or final motivation to actually do it. I knew that I had to get good quality photos. I had met a parent at the daycare who was a semi-professional photographer and when the painting was completed I asked him to come over and take some pictures.

This was early in November. Then, somewhat skeptically, I took the photos to various Art departments. To my astonishment, within 24 hours, I had two 6-hour assignments for Sir George Williams University’s Art Department, paying \$5 an hour. I couldn’t believe that one got paid more for passively posing for an art class, than teaching a class of over 30 students. It made no sense to me, however ....

The next day, I got a 2-hour assignment from the Powerhouse Studio, located a couple of blocks away on St. Dominique. The following week, I got another 14 hours work from Sir George Williams and another two from Powerhouse.

However, whatever illusions I had that this would be an erotically charged experience were quickly dispersed. I had been particularly worried that I would see a sexy student ogling my privates and immediately have an erection. I needn't have worried. The atmosphere was clinical and objective and the temperature was cool enough to keep my cock shriveled (of course then I worried about not looking 'hung' enough!). Maybe it was a good thing, as far as the prospect of tumescent humiliation went, that no-one talked to me and that the overall treatment was so depersonalizing. Then again, maybe the sight of a large, straining member would have 'animated' an orgy. Yeah – right!

Emotionally, I was as vulnerable as ever. The transition from Coloniale to St. Dominique had been smooth on a material level but not on an emotional one. Jennifer continued to make me feel guilty and the more she did that, the more I recoiled.

*Diary Entry: 5/11/74*

*I passed my cab driver's written test (after only a couple of evening's preparation!). I felt so good about this that I stopped off to visit Michou. It was a good rendez-vous. The next night we slept together here.*

*12/11/74*

*Battering sessions with Jennifer. Haven't heard from Michou since we slept together. I am depressed and angry. Fuck you, Michou ... you and your security ... your friends and insulating social environment.*

*17/11/74*

*After a heavy session with Jennifer chez elle, there is something of a breakthrough. I feel open, turned on and we finish up by making love. It is good but there is hurt beneath the surface.*

*20/11/74*

*Went with Michou to see an Italian film at Outremont. Afterwards we went to El Gitano and then back to my place. I am having feelings with Michou that I haven't had for a long time. I seem to be going through a thawing-out process at the moment. Slowly, and often painfully, I am dropping my defenses and letting feelings both in and out. There is both good and bad with Michou. We have a good intellectual rapport (although Michou feels inadequate). We really turn each other on although it hasn't been that great sexually. Emotionally, we are defensive with each other. I think it would be hard to feel secure with Michou. She is so gregarious and flighty. On the other hand we share interests such as writing children's stories.*

*This morning we woke up in the open, unfurnished space that is my new home, and there was 8-10 inches of snow on the ground. It was magical. We sat on the mattress, drinking strong, hot coffee and looking out on the comforting blanket of snow. Sad when Michou had to leave.*

*22/11/74*

*And so to Friday, the 22<sup>nd</sup>. November and my 28<sup>th</sup>. birthday. Finish modeling assignment at S.G.W.U. at 5.30 and, feeling prosperous, buy a bottle of Crème de Cacao (Jennifer's favorite). But the evening at Coloniale is depressing. I feel touched*

*when Jennifer gives me a beautiful leather belt but there is tension between us. I trudge through the snow and pick up a Gazette. The headlines are:*

- ❖ *WINTER BLOWS BACK WITH A HOWL*
- ❖ *ARAB NATIONS TIGHTEN NOOSE AMID WANING PEACE HOPES*
- ❖ *HEAVILY ARMED SYRIA WAITING FOR NEW WAR*
- ❖ *BIRMINGHAM BLAST KILLS 17 IN TAVERNS*
- ❖ *DIRTY DOZEN FACES COLD, JOBLESS WINTER*

*(this referred to government predictions that at least 12 of Quebec's 74 Federal ridings would have unemployment rates of 18.9% or higher over the winter months)*

*It is now the 23<sup>rd</sup>. and I am writing this diary in the Mindmill Coffee/Folk Music Restaurant on Bleury. I walked in frozen and the place was empty. There are 2 musicians waiting to play. The owner is making them wait until there is an audience of more than one.*

*Now, with an audience of 6, a big, black guy with an incredible line-battered face, is driving out lyrics about 'the girl I love ... she up and left me ... with my best friend ...' and he keeps breaking off in the middle of a song to rub his hands ... I know what he feels like.*

*27<sup>th</sup>. November*

*Yesterday there was a full moon. What better time for Jennifer to announce the 'official break up'. Today, however, the break has been patched up.*

*I am trying to figure out a way to get a piano donated to the daycare.*

In early December, I called Bill Roberts of CJAD Radio, and asked him if he could help us get a piano. Three hours later, Michou calls me from the daycare and says that Bill Roberts has just called with the names and numbers of 2 (!) people who have offered the pianos free of charge. Wow! The power of the media!

A while later, five of us set off in a van to pick up the chosen piano from Hudson, sixty kilometers out of Montreal. I was aware that this excursion was going to be a test for me – a test of how well I could accept Michou in her francophone environment. I was becoming aware that I had been relating too much to Michou 'La Quebecoise' rather than Michou, the person. What this meant was that I had seen my relationship with Michou as a way of becoming better assimilated into francophone society. I knew that being on 'chomage' was the ideal time for me to improve my French. However it was one thing to improve my French in bed (so to speak) with Michou. It was another to set off in a cramped van on a half-day excursion with four native-born and séparatiste Quebecers. As it turned out, I managed well enough with my French on the way there. However, on the way back, we smoked a joint and suddenly I felt isolated, alienated and paranoid. In turn, these states were accompanied by feelings of rage, despair and jealousy. A day later, Michou told me that she would be away for a week over the Christmas period with her family.

What I wanted and needed above all else was friendship. That was what I was trying to preserve with Jennifer. That was what I hoped for with Michou. The romantic and sexual aspects of my relationship with either woman were secondary.

*Diary Entry: 19/12/74*

*Christmas Time. Anger and rage against what 'they' tell me 'we' should be feeling ... joy, happiness, peace on earth, good will towards all men. Christ, it is over 1,940 years since you died ... can you honestly say you succeeded?*

*Christmas Time and most people at the daycare are going away. My identification with them as 'les pauvres' vanishes. Why should I give any presents? Why should I send cards? Why should I hold a Xmas party?*

*And speaking of that, I was invited to Joy's Christmas party. She told me that Carlos would be there. I debated whether or not to go. In the end, I went with Jennifer. We had had a breakthrough a few days earlier and were still riding the wave. The party doesn't last long. We are drunk, high and happy when we arrive. We do not mingle. Then I incur Joy's wrath when I break a whole bottle of wine, due to the back of the fridge (where I had placed it) having a wider gap to the wall than I had anticipated. I make a brief attempt to talk with Carlos, but as usual, he is the one who does the talking. Nothing has changed as he pontificates about Quebecers and blacks. In a momentary lull, I ask him what matters to him, and he replies "me and my art".*

*Jennifer and I leave and go to the Lorelei. It is closed so we take a cab to Soulteque on St. Lawrence. The music isn't too great but we dance, laugh and fool around.*

*27/12/74*

*Survived Christmas Day. Today, Jennifer drops a bombshell. She tells me that she tried to get pregnant by me and that she might in fact now be pregnant. I am speechless. Before Ellie ... now Jennifer.*

*And to make matters worse, this evening both Jennifer and Michou have been invited to the same party. I have not been invited. My thoughts turn to men. I MUST develop friendships again with men. I recall Daniel's party. It really did seem that gay men have more fun – a lot more fun. Hmm ...*

## 12.

My loneliness and feelings of rage and despair over Christmas got expressed in something I gave to Michou at the beginning of January, 1975. The title of the piece was 'Stripped Bare':



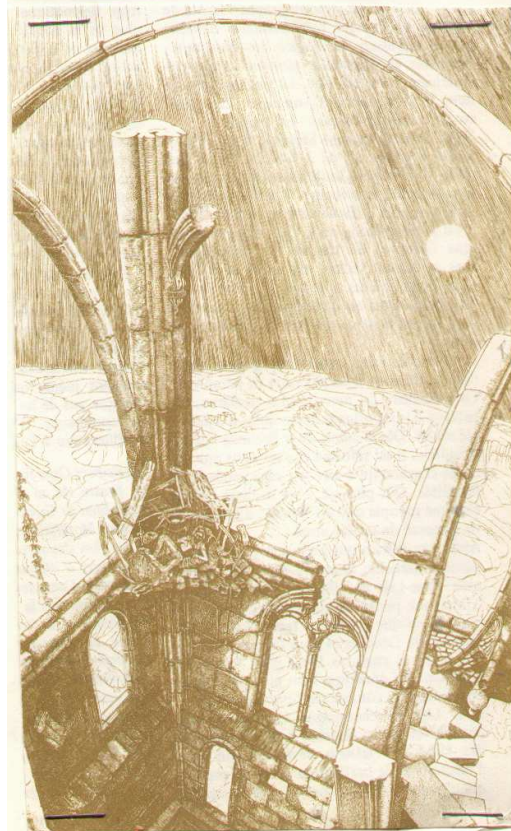
The Contradiction:  
so good when together  
not so good when apart

Symptoms of The Problem:  
waiting, waiting  
hope, expectation  
want, need  
wanting the happiness to fly on  
wanting the security to strengthen  
wanting the freedom to be  
wanting the fulfilment to become

needing to give  
needing to take  
needing to share  
needing to love

loneliness  
aleness  
alone  
al one  
not all one  
the hurt of being separated  
being separate  
being apart  
being a part when  
you were away

more symptoms:  
confusion  
as to the nature  
and strength of your feelings  
anger in reflection of the  
raw naked vulnerability  
that comes from imbalance  
of being the one  
out on a limb



envy, rage, bitterness  
when at times  
the full force of a comparison  
thrusters into my guts

the comparison of your castle  
to my dungeon  
you who can afford  
to turn people away from your castle

the mandarins call it  
'relative deprivation'  
and say that it leads  
to such social 'problems' as  
theft, robbery with violence and war  
i believe it  
i feel it  
i know it

sometimes i want to smash your castle  
sometimes i want to lead you  
into the underworld ... for a taste  
just as at other times  
i want you to help lead me into  
the light and warmth

if you at least try to understand my loneliness and rage, i'll allow you your castle ...  
how's that?



And now; the root causes of the problem:



Norbert The Nomad Attempts A Re-Entry

your land has been the womb  
for a kind of rebirth  
i did not come here as a visitor  
i did not come here as a transient  
i did not come as a colonizer  
i have travelled through  
inner and outer space  
through deserts  
i am tired  
i have wandered  
i have been a nomad  
finally i have come to rest  
now i want to learn your language  
want to know your customs  
want to feel and touch the  
souls of your people  
i want to contribute what I can  
i want to be accepted



but i am what i am ... before everything else ... before i can succeed, i must survive – materially, psychologically, spiritually ... and that means that sometimes i have to withdraw from the battle ... for your rites de passage are hard, my friend, re-entry is tough ... as the nomad, i entered many places but i never had to re-enter ... the road always went one way ... like a space capsule returning to earth ... got to have a resistant shell otherwise the friction would be too great ... it would burn to a cinder ... for you do resist me my friend ... you may not know it, but you do .... so i must be strong unless i too burn out ... you resist me by demanding much of me ... you must give me time, i came here with nothing ... i need time to find where to employ those skills that i have ... i need time to make friends ... i need time to learn your language and ways ... i need time to make a home ... forgive me if sometimes i seem impatient ... it is only because as a nomad i learned much and now i desire greatly to put it to use ... i want to be useful ... on occasion i don't know whether you help or hinder me in my re-entry ... but just remember one thing my friend ... that there are times when i feel i have only one thing left to protect me ... and that is my pride and dignity .... and when stripped bare of everything but that, i stand up ... shake my fist at the heavens and shout 'i'm proud to be Norbert the Nomad.'

So Michou LeBlanc, let me run the gamut of my emotions ... as only women are meant to do ... but that was in pre-liberation days ... now some women are becoming more strategic ... and some men more emotional ...

Michou LeBlanc

you who are tired of being seen as the angel  
you who want to feel passion  
you who have a low tolerance to stress  
you who have called yourself 'catholic' and 'anarchist'  
you who have hurt but not been hurt  
you who are so insulated by your friends  
you who feel that you could only be jealous of a women more intellectual than you  
you who have said that you know what it is to feel nothingness  
you who have turned away from ideas of a coop  
you who don't like 'power games' and yet are so evidently in a power position  
you who let me be the 'active one in the relationship'  
you who have said that you feel more alive since meeting me  
you who like Klee and kid's books and Japanese food and subtlety  
you who are embarrassed by too crude or 'open' a form of expression  
you who are worried about me 'using' you because you are a Quebecoise

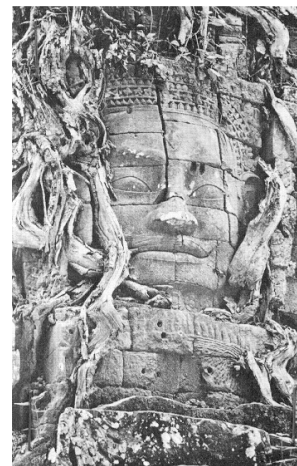
Michou LeBlanc

let me confront you with my affections and my afflictions  
let me try to provoke you into response  
it doesn't matter if it's positive or negative ... anything is better than nothing

it is the vacuum that i cannot take

Michou LeBlanc

i want you and need you and get frustrated at not seeing you often enough and envious if you are seeing Bob more than me and confused at your holding-back and anxious because i don't feel you need me and afraid because you could reject me so easily for being 'too demanding' ... and i get hurt because i've had a fucking terrible Christmas and because i'm lonely and impatient and excited and enthusiastic



and because i've got carried away with all the things that have been stimulated by my contact with you learning French, coop, daycare ... you see, if I do 5 hours French a day and 2 hours thinking about developmental drama, then i somehow need your support and recognition for that ... which means i need contact with you ... and if i don't get that contact i get hurt ... what i am saying here IS MY PROBLEM

reinforcing the 'me' that is quite independent of you; this has meant turning to writing and music; the learning French and the rest continues, but not with the same total involvement; VOILA ... the reasons for the temporary withdrawal.

\* \* \*

Letter from Michou: Extracts, 22/1/75

- *"Don't underestimate my sensitivity to your feelings of vulnerability, to your openness. I am too sensitive to it (et impuissante)"*
- *"The deadline was over. I was cold, like a little girl who is caught having not done her homework."*
- *"I was tired (I see you laughing). I wanted to see you, but I wanted to see somebody who would say "I am happy to see you" and not "I haven't seen you for a week, when are you going to be more active?"*
- *"You want recognition for 5 hours French, 2 hours of Developmental Drama. I want recognition for 6 hours working with kids, 3 hours meetings, 4 hours taking care of Alexa, + telling stories, washing clothes, buying food, making supper, etc."*
- *"You want to draw attention to yourself."*
- *"You are right, we are too far apart. Our needs are incompatible. You have asked what I want of you. I can only repeat what I have said in the beginning. I want to breathe, I want some good times with you, and some not so good times. But I cannot draw the pattern and follow it. That is you – not me."*
- *"For the first time in my life, I am really interested in my 'work'. You have your piano / your writing / your developmental drama. As you said, all you need is time to find where to employ those skills. I have no skills. I need time and energy to acquire them."*
- *"To me the balance is so evidently in your favor. My castle is so small. I cannot afford to let you smash it. That is the reason for my withdrawal."*

Michou was right. I was not letting her breathe. I was suffocating her with my needs in the same way that I felt Jennifer had been suffocating me. She was right that I wanted to draw attention to myself. I wanted to scream out "don't exclude me, I have so much to offer". I had proposed a developmental drama program that I would run at the Daycare. I wasn't asking to be paid. The kids needed structured play activities. I had procured a piano so the program would include music. I thought that the 'Comité de Pédagogie would jump at it, but I had been waiting for their response for at least a month. They seemed to be dragging their feet. What was the problem? Was it due to not being a 'real' parent? Was it because of my involvement with both Jennifer and Michou?

I waited and waited. Then I was told that my proposal was still under consideration and would be discussed at an upcoming 'Jour de Pédagogie'. I waited some more. Eventually I was told that my proposal had been turned down. I wrote a letter to the Daycare asking for some explanation as to why it had been turned down. Three weeks later, I received a brief reply that read:

*Nous avons reçu ta lettre. Cette lettre va être référée au nouveau comité de pédagogie qui va être formé sous peu. Excuse-nous du retard de cette lettre, quelques divergences de vues nous empêchaient de répondre plus tôt,*

*Centre St. Louis. Comité de Coordination*

Much later, I received a long and interesting letter that explained what had really been happening.

*Dear Ian,*

*This letter is in response to the one you sent to the daycare center about 6 months ago. Its lateness is due to the confusion surrounding the issue of your participation in the daycare center. People felt detached from your particular problem and even forgot about it. Our attitude during this period was inexcusable.*

*The major problem was that there was no definition of anyone's role apart from those of full-time monitors. A number of people had participated on a part time basis and had clearly manifested the desire to understand and contribute to the struggle for daycare. But there were two blocks in the center: the parents and the monitors – and we didn't know how or where to integrate those who didn't fit into either of these two categories (e.g. Louise Gendron, a cook; Ghislaine, a 'stagiaire' who spent several months here, and yourself).*

*The secondary problem was that people saw their work at the garderie in two parts, one on a political level, and the other on a practical level, with the former being considered the most important level. Consequently, there were some people working three days a week with the kids and two days on other tasks. When there were pedagogical problems with the children, there was a tendency to justify problems (not resolve them) on the basis that we couldn't devote all our energies at this level. As well, in terms of planning programs for the children, there was always a great lack of discipline.*

*As a consequence of these problems, your program was seen as a short-term experimental course for the kids which didn't have a high priority. This is the objective fact even if subjectively the daycare center would not have stated it in these terms.*

*The daycare center has changed a great deal since that time. It is more democratic in the sense that anyone (monitor, parent, volunteer, etc.) interested in participating actively can join the Comité de Lutte. There are no more exclusive monitor's meetings. The requirements of being a monitor are based on the needs of the daycare center (i.e. of the parents and their children) rather than on political needs. This in no way means that everyone has abandoned proletarian revolution as the only real solution to our problems, but rather that political tasks are not seen as the principle objectives of the Comité de Lutte. The practical consequences of the process of democratization of the daycare center are: (1) a remarkable amelioration in the pedagogy and in the organization of the daycare center in general, (2) a greater participation of everyone interested.*

*The present Comité de Pédagogie is made up of parents and monitors and is organizing several practical educational projects. Should you have arrived with your project now, we feel the results would have been totally different.*

*This letter represents the position of the Comité de Lutte. If you are interested in discussing it, we are more than willing. Your problem and other similar problems were a great lesson to us in how to build a democratic popular service, which corresponds to the needs and interests of the community.*

Although still sore, I was impressed by this letter and its honest admissions. For my part, the whole affair had clarified several things. Firstly, despite the fact that I hadn't cheated on Jennifer, I had created a messy situation by being involved with two single mothers whose kids went to the same daycare. Shortly after receiving Michou's response to my piece 'Stripped Bare', I decided to bow out of sexual involvement with Michou. However I continued to take Krista to and from the daycare.

Secondly, I realized that my attempts to become part of the Quebecois 'proletarian revolution' by fighting with and for the daycare were too much of an uphill struggle. I wasn't Quebecois. I didn't speak fluent French. I wasn't a parent. I was offering pedagogical courses but I wasn't even a trained teacher. No-one knew about my five year stint as a 'blue-collar' worker, and if they did, they probably didn't care. I didn't belong to either the pro-Moscow or pro-Beijing Communist party, and the experience of the 'dictatorship of the Left' at the daycare had not aroused any desire to do so.

I was 28, an outsider, and unemployed. I felt like a failure. I was an ex public schoolboy who had betrayed his class but was deeply attached to the kind of friendships and community I'd experienced. For eight years, I had been trying without success to find, or create a substitute. Like D.H. Lawrence, I was seeking fraternal love in my relationships with women. I wanted *friendship* above everything else – deep, loyal, lasting friendship. And if I could not have friendship with women, because sex got in the way, then I was ready to consider other options.

The need for friendship was also a need for security. I had discovered that security came in all kinds of shapes and sizes. When you had it, you took it for granted. Most people, rooted to their families, their childhood friends, their churches, their neighborhoods, their steady jobs, had no idea of what hardships accompanied financial and emotional insecurity. Once in a while, I came across someone who did understand. It was in 1975 that I read an article in the Montreal Star written by a man who truly understood. I was profoundly moved by his story. The man's name was David Marvin and his story was about being down and out in Montreal.

Here it is, reprinted in full:

*When my cash go low, and I went to live on Richmond Square, it hit me hard. It was nothing new for me to be out of a job and having a hard time finding another. Things had always been that sort of mess. But always before I had hung on somehow and looked respectable. I wasn't sorry to lose my \$23-a-week newspaper job; it was rotten enough having lived a year on that, and I thought I would soon get something better. Now, after a month, I still wasn't working, and on my \$13-a-week unemployment insurance the best I could afford was a \$5-weekly room on Richmond Square. It was a come-down having to live in such a place and it gave me a feeling that things would be bad.*

*Richmond Square was ugly in a way that made me ache. It was an offshoot of unsaintly St. Antoine Street, one that cut it into two rectangles of arid dirt. The north side was a steep embankment, and halfway up it were the CPR tracks running into Windsor Station.*

*Even before I saw it, I imagined my room with the bare light bulb dangling from the ceiling, the odd cockroach decorating a big splotch where the damp had seeped through the plaster, and an odor of sewage from defective drains. The noise and smoke and cinders from the railroads covered the whole mess.*

*Once I was a denizen of Richmond Square there was just one thing to do: Get a job fast so I could move away and live in a decent place again. I didn't like the idea that I might settle into the sort of life of the other people in the rooming house - the landlord and his string of common-law wives; the factory girls who had made the top-story rooms a makeshift brothel, or the alcoholic-dope addict woman in the room next to mine. It was a spur to work hard at finding a job and I spent all my time on it. To be working became an obsession and when I slept I dreamed of writing applications and going for interviews.*

*Things were getting bad as I had expected. It was summer when I left the newspaper but now it was fall and winter coming. Jobs were scarce, and it was hard for me to get one anyway, since I was deaf and couldn't convince anyone that I could do anything. Altogether I had just 66 days of unemployment insurance. When that ran out, I'd be derelict. I was gripped by a frantic urgency to land a job. I knew I was in a rat-trap and it frightened me.*

*When I applied for office work with a big firm and they said no, I asked for work on their night maintenance staff. I was almost happy at the thought of mopping the smooth floors in that fine office building. But they said no, and I went away feeling like the drowning man who had clutched at a straw - and missed.*

*One day I was accosted by a panhandler from the ferocious tribe that saturated St. Antoine Street. He was a bleary man with dirty iron-grey hair, in greasy clothes that had a slept-in look and an odor of sweat and stale beer. Life for him was a transit from gutter to gutter. After I had told him to go to Hell, I thought, 'I'm in a jumble but at least, I'll never be like that.' Then I knew with a sharp realization that I was wrong; I was already halfway to being 'like that'. I felt as if a sneer had been wiped off my face.*

*I tried to be objective and level-headed about the mess I was in, but I was too much in the middle of it and felt myself being drawn under. I had got into a rut once too often and had a feeling of being broken down and old. I told myself 22 is too young an age at which to be getting old; you ought to have enough jump left to get out of dozens of things like this. But I kept going down from one low level to another until my only decent impulse was a simple overwhelming desire to have a job, just a job of any sort to keep from starving on unemployment insurance or being down-and-out.*

*I had hopes of being a dishwasher but I needed experience. I told the restaurant manager, I could write a textbook on dishwashing. He was absolutely certain I hadn't the right sort of experience.*

*Montreal became hateful to me. I thought of it as a vast animate thing with the soul of a snake, and I wanted to get a ship and be away from all the rottenness. The giver of jobs at seafarers was the dispatcher who stood in front of a blackboard on which were chalked the names of and the ratings wanted.*

*"At the moment," he said, "we have all the men necessary to man our ships." He needn't have told me; I already knew, I was trapped in Montreal; I hated the place; I was trapped in a rut that I couldn't get out of, and the only direction I could move was down."*

*My unemployment insurance was almost gone. I had no more spirit for this game, I knew, but there was nothing to do but keep on trying. I began to feel there was*

*a conspiracy against me, because all the people I met seemed the same. They looked on me with the insentient gaze of frogs and always said no.*

*The social order must be rotten, I thought, when human life depends on having money or the ability to make it. I hated the social order all the more because it was an impersonal force that I couldn't go up and kick. It had shut me out simply because I wasn't a money-making factor in the economic system. Therefore, I wouldn't get a job and the means to live. All the people who denied me a job denied me the right to live. They were all my executioners.*

*When I asked for work and was told no, it was like being condemned to hang. That sort of thinking is bad, I told myself; you only get yourself deeper in the rut. But then I thought, I'm tired of making excuses for life.*

*This sort of life I'm living drags a man down. I'm going lower by stages and doing things I thought I'd never do.*

*A dullness was coming over me and when anything miserable happened my reaction was likely to be "who cares" or "never mind." My main wish was that the whole thing would be over. If someone had cut my throat I would have thought it very decent of him*

*Then I became a first-class drunk. My \$13 weekly didn't give me much leeway, though I made the most of it. I bought one loaf of bread a day and spent the rest on liquor. When the drink supply wouldn't last until the next week's stipend, I spiked it with rubby which was cheap. Time after time I woke up on dirty mornings cracked head, impaired vision and the burdensome knowledge that life must continue. Now I didn't care about not having a job. The great thing was to have money for another binge.*

*I couldn't believe that anything worth a damn and couldn't care less if the rubbing alcohol I drank made me blind or demented. I was going to the dogs anyway, so why he bothered? Besides, since nice society had made me a pariah, I meant to give them good reason for doing it. I discarded everything connecting me with the outer world - beyond Richmond Square. The one decent suit I had, which I wore when applying for jobs, was hopelessly spoiled during a binge. I shaved seldom and had a mongrelish, unpleasantly unhealthy look. I had acquired the aura of the gutter and the panhandlers no longer asked me for money.*

*As my sensibilities broke down, I junked all the hopes and illusions I had ever had. I proved to my own satisfaction that there was no logic in anything, so I did nothing but try to achieve oblivion as often and as long as I could. Once in a while, when my old objectivity returned, I told myself it would be best to stop drinking and get a grip on things. Life was life no matter what form it took and one mustn't despair. I couldn't get around myself though. I was down and there was no way to get up. Everything was utterly rotten and I would go on drinking myself to death. That was that. To stop drinking required a spiritual regeneration, but at that point I hadn't learned to pray.*

*When I hadn't money for drink and couldn't borrow it I pawned my belongings. I drank up a watch in one night's wild binge that ended in a jail cell next morning. Then I drank up a typewriter I hadn't paid for. It wasn't until my unemployment insurance had run out that I pawned my hearing-aid. It meant a lot to me as the last of the material symbols connecting me with the world outside my now unbalanced mind. When I realized it was gone I felt very solemn. I had isolated myself completely.*

*The night I pawned my hearing-aid I set out on the craziest spree ever. During the week it lasted I scarcely ever knew what I was doing. Memory didn't function since my mind didn't record what was going on. Only in short stretches did I know that I existed at all, and then it was just a timeless world where everything was indistinct, day was a white haze and night a black background for weird patterns of neon lights and blue flashes from the streetcar trolleys.*

*One night I found myself ambling through streams of traffic with cars swerving around me. Another night (or perhaps the same) I was in a railroad yard, climbing up and balancing on a high board fence. My slow focusing vision settled on what turned out to be a dog on the other side, big and ferocious and waiting for me to come down off the fence. I jumped and it got me by the wrist. Then it let go and stood back, barking. I wondered why it hadn't ripped my throat out and saw that a man was standing behind it. "Is the dog dangerous?" I asked, and from the way he nodded I knew it was.*

*I was in a jail cell on a cold winter morning - just another drunk raked from the ditch during the night - one of those weak-willed persons without talent who couldn't learn how to live.*

*When I was let loose, I went back to my den on Richmond Square, the cold, hopeless room where a previous tenant had left a cheap lithograph of Christ hanging upside-down on the wall. Though I had nothing, the place was a haven, I was revolting even to other flophouse inmates because I had sunk lower than they, and the landlord wanted the rent I owed. I had no money at all, nothing left to pawn, everyone had cut me off and I had cut off everyone. Everything I had dreamt had happened. It wasn't my sort of world. I was baffled and couldn't see myself. This was rock bottom. I could only hope that the worst thing about that sort of hell was the descent into it.*

*For all good purposes my life was over and the future was just a horrid emptiness. No trace of hope that I could ever be decent and clean. Then when all spirit was gone and every-thing wrecked, I found there wasn't the simple recourse of falling down and letting it end then and there. I had to keep going though there was nothing ahead. It was then that I started coming back. In spite of everything, I was alive and kicking and that was the most and least that I could have. The genesis of reborn hope was in the fact that the worst that could happen had happened and I had nothing more to fear.*

People didn't understand what it was to be stripped bare to the point where you went beyond the need for security, beyond fear itself.





## 13.

I had to get my life on some kind of worthwhile track, at least before I turned 30. I was making progress. I knew that I didn't want to be a community organizer (or social animator) because I didn't have the credibility to represent or fit into the target population. I had tried briefly to eke out an income through freelance writing and had failed. All signs seemed to point to being a teacher. I reasoned that at least as a teacher, I could have legitimacy and credibility based solely on my skills. I could enter a meritocracy unsullied by racial, class or gender identity. I could make my classroom, MY classroom, into my own little universe. Wasn't it all about learning? Wasn't that what we were here for – to learn? Jennifer had told me that I was good at three things, these being looking after Krista, making love, and teaching ... in no particular order.

In January, I had heard from Jim's ex-student, Alan, who told me that an economist at C.B.C. needed a researcher for a few months. Her name was Diane Cohen. We had got together and she had hired me to do research on 'the relationship between the Canadian economic structure and the national pattern of settlement'. I knew how to do research. The job was not hard. Diane was pleased and I was earning an income again, just as my U.I. payments were running out. However, like the proof-reading job at Aquilla, it was a boring job with no human contact.

There seemed to be no alternative but to return to University to upgrade my 'ticket'. I decided to apply to both the M.Ed. program at Sir George Williams University and the Diploma in Education at McGill. There was a summer school course at S.G.W.U. entitled 'The Limits to Educational Reform' that interested me. By doing that course, I would get a good look at the Program without making the commitment to full-time study. If I liked it, I *might* stick with the Masters. If I didn't like it, or in any case, I would do what seemed to make the most sense, and that was to swallow my post-graduate pride, and invest in how to become both a certified and a skillful teacher.

*Diary Entry: February, 1975*

*Difference between 'the educator' and 'the writer':*

*The writer can, and often does reject the external world. Despite such writers as Hemmingway and Orwell who saw the importance of action in and on the external world, the essential aspect of the writer's role is to be the outsider and the observer. The essential act is monologue. The essential act of the educator, by contrast, is dialogue. In addition, he must participate in the external world by definition. Whereas the writer can lurk in the shadows of conventional society, the educator must stay within more conservative limits, which in turn means that he needs more than credibility as an individual, he needs credibility as a social being. He has greater need of roots than the writer. He has greater need of 'attachment' and 'engagement'.*

*Diary Entry: March, 1975*

*Big insight about two principles that have evolved in my twenties and that now lie at the core of my being:*

*PRINCIPLE #1: No-one will ever again be able to make me feel guilty about having some unfair advantage if I start from nothing, i.e. no friends, no job, no money.*

*PRINCIPLE #2 : It is immoral to indulge want when there are other still in need.*

*And lastly, an insight from the librarian/astrologer who did my chart at the McLennan Library, the guy who told me in awe that I had 6 signs in Scorpio – including my sun, moon, ascendant, as well as Jupiter, Venus and Mercury.*

*He said, looking at my chart, that there were two important sources of inner conflict:*

- (1) “when you get a certain momentum in some project, it carries you away, even after you want to stop”,*
- (2) “you have incredible intensity of power; this is, in itself, not a problem – the problem only arises if you do not have anywhere to put that power”.*

I knew that both observations were true. I NEEDED TO OWN MY POWER. If I could not find or create power with friends or family or community, then I needed to commit myself to a career that provided me the opportunity to accomplish that goal.

I also knew that I didn't have to be the lonely nomad. Jennifer had got somebody else to move in – another single mother and her child. There was nothing stopping me finding a man to share my space and help relieve financial pressures. And so it was that at the end of April, I asked a parent who I knew from Centre St. Louis, if he would like to share my flat. At the beginning of May, Roger Joachym – a U.S. draft resister, moved in with me.

However, there were some things that I just did not have control over:

*Letter from Mum: 11/5/75: Extract*

*“Sorry I sounded so depressed when I was at Aunt Mollie’s ... please don’t worry about me, I usually manage to get on top of the depression in the end. Finding out that Daddy has an identical twin was a severe shock and has made me distrust the whole family. I feel that I have been surrounded by a conspiracy of silence.”*

Three weeks later, I was told by my sister that she had received a letter from our father, describing my mother as being “crazy”. It turned out that there had been a huge crisis in which my father had reacted to my mother's paranoid delusions and had moved out and stayed at his sister's house, (my Aunt Margaret). When Margaret heard that my mother had talked of my father having a twin, she had said that my mother should “go to Craighouse” (Edinburgh's main psychiatric institution). This was while my mother was seeking refuge with Aunt Mollie in Derby.

\* \* \*

By June, my researcher job for Diane Cohen had ended and I was once again unemployed and applying for U.I. benefits, for the second summer in a row.

Although not in the same league as my mother, I also felt paranoid. Jennifer had joined La Comité de Lutte, a committee to which Michou also belonged. My feelings of exclusion were heightened by several factors, including: (1) Jennifer's newly configured home that now included another single mother and her child, (2) the fact that Jennifer had set up an arrangement with my flat-mate, Roger, to share child-transportation duties, (3) the relationship between Krista and her biological father, Ted (one that I had encouraged and Jennifer had initially resisted), had strengthened to the point that Krista was going to visit her Dad in his new home in Baton Rouge. My feelings of exclusion and betrayal, so easily evoked, were running rampant. I had put up with Jennifer's shit. I had helped her gain

a foothold at Dawson. I had put in a large amount of time and energy for over a year taking care of Krista. I had withdrawn from Michou because I felt it compromised my 'emotional loyalty' to Jennifer. Now, I had lost *my* foothold at the daycare, I was losing touch with Krista, I was suspicious and jealous about Jennifer's arrangement with Roger. And to cap it all off, Jennifer was in the process of making arrangements to visit Britain, including seeing my parents in Edinburgh.

*Diary Entry: 2/7/75*

*Ah, McGill McLennan Library – my asylum, my perennial sanctuary in times of distress. You accept me, you leave me alone, you let me be. You are neutral. Your territory is not charged, like that of 3522 St. Dominique.*

*There is no T.V. to numb your brain. There is no telephone to titillate your expectations – expectation that someone, somewhere may be about to contact you.*

*I sit here reflecting on the fact that once again I am unemployed.*

*'Unemployed' – 'involuntary idleness of a worker seeking work at prevailing wages' says Webster's 3<sup>rd</sup>. International Dictionary (unabridged)*

*'Labor Market' – 'the area within which workers compete for jobs and employers compete for workers' ... well I've been doing my part, sending off applications here, there and everywhere, but I don't see them falling over themselves to grab this 'worker'.*

Purification by fire, a painful and dangerous process, but one that ultimately dissolved fear and resurrected hope. It was as David Marvin said:

*"The genesis of reborn hope was in the fact that the worst that could happen had happened and I had nothing more to fear."*

David Marvin knew from experience what Evelyn Puxley pointed out in her book Poverty in Montreal; there was an undeniable connection between poverty and scarcity on the one hand, and material and psychological well-being on the other.

One day, my sister Joy gave me a copy of 'Ramparts' magazine that contained the most precise explanation of these connections that I had ever seen. The quotation comes from an article by the educator Edgar Friedenberg on R. D. Laing, entitled 'The Politics of Madness'.

*One of Laing's most evocative ideas is that scarcity lies at the root of human alienation. While Laing takes the idea from Sartre, who in turn elaborated it from Marxian sources, the kind of alienation that he emphasizes is quite different from the alienation Marx saw as a central condition of capitalism.*

*Laing is concerned with psychological alienation, which deprives people of the capacity to accept or even become aware of their own feelings and respond to their own needs. Marx referred to the alienation of the worker from the fruits of labor and the economic context in which he worked - his inability to control either his tools or his job, in neither of which he had any vested rights comparable to those of proprietorship. Both kinds of alienation proceed simultaneously in industrial societies and reinforce each other. Objective deprivation and economic insecurity create intense anxiety and lower self-esteem, making their victims unwilling or unable to take psychic risks, or tolerate their own or other persons' impulses towards growth, dissent or rebellion. Each individual's mounting sense of existential guilt and self-betrayal, makes him increasingly hostile towards signs of growth, honest feeling and self-realization in others.*

*This viciously circular relationship between economic and psychic insecurity is a central social fact; it is the source of the psychological and political oppression that, like air and water pollution, we have come to accept as the emblem of life in our time, our gray badge of endurance.*

*What seems to me to be implied inescapably by Laing's position, though he would surely reject this conclusion himself, if possible - is that **freedom and self-realization have always been and must remain, the concerns of an elite of some kind, self-defined by its very nature as an enemy of the people** (my emphasis). If it is not to become merely another group, obsessed and corrupted by the demands of its own defense, then clearly it must be relatively invulnerable for reasons with which it need not concern itself too much from day to day. Wealth helps, but capitalism has done a superb job of defining wealth so that nobody ever seems sure he has enough and can keep it, especially in a state made fretful by an uneasy social conscience. The national conscience has enough to be fretful about, but humaneness derived from guilt, is about as trustworthy as chastity imposed by gonorrhoea. Neither is evidence of a change of heart.*

*If my reasoning is correct, demands for a just society, as social justice is now conceived, must continue to conflict very sharply with the demand for personal self-realization.*

*(‘Ramparts’, April 1974, vol. 12, no. 9, p. 21)*

This quotation connected all the dots. So called ‘Buddhist economics’ made unlikely bedfellows of both the Sedbergh ethos and that of the counter-culture. But *choosing* scarcity was not the same as imposed scarcity, one that seemed inescapable. The man that climbed Everest and survived those hardships was treated by Society as a hero, whereas the person that had the courage and strength to slog on, up and over one mountain after another, in the journey through the perilous and unpredictable terrain of poverty, day after day, month after month ... this person was unseen and unappreciated. If his plight was made visible, as in the case of someone like David Marvin, you could be sure that the usual explanations would be trotted out – ‘he was lazy’, ‘he was weak’, ‘he was an addict’, along with the usual solutions of individual betterment. **IF** social justice was one’s goal, then personal self-realization was not enough.

## 14.

In September 1975, I emerged from the fire of loneliness and alienation. Two major changes in my life took place at that time. Firstly, I started the Diploma in Education Program at McGill University. Secondly, I joined a band.

In the summer, I had taken the Sir George Williams University course in 'The Limits to Educational Reform'. I had done well and got an 'A' grade but had found, once again, the post-graduate milieu to be stifling, hence my decision to commit myself to the Diploma program.

Jennifer had spent August in Britain, including a visit to Edinburgh where she stayed a few nights at my parents' house. While she was there, I had spent time with her musician friend Howard. He kept encouraging me to play publicly. My piano had been moved into my place on St. Dominique some months earlier, and I had been exploring extended 'raga' improvisations. I wasn't at all sure that I wanted to join a band. What I wanted was to meet a conga player. To that end, I decided to put a card up on the notice-board of 'The Yellow Door', Montreal's anglophone folk club. One day in late August, I received a call from someone called Stephen Barry. I had already seen his band play with Howard. They were a good blues band and when Steven suggested that we all get together, I was interested. We met a week later at the Yellow Door and jammed. The session went well and I accepted their offer to become the keyboard player in the Steven Barry Blue Band.

Jennifer had got permission from Dawson College to extend her stay in Britain, and didn't return until close to the end of September.

### Diary Entry: 26/9/75

*Jennifer is back. I felt many things while she was away: envy, confusion (when she wrote in a letter, "I LOVE your mother – she is simply wonderful and I fell in love with her"), insecurity/jealousy with respect to possible sexual escapades, etc. But I also felt liberated to pursue my own wants without looking over my shoulder at Jennifer's reaction. The arrangement remains the same. She is sharing her house on Coloniale with Connie, and I am here at St. Dominique with Roger. But despite our continued separation, I am afraid of returning to the guilt-ridden prison of 'emotional monogamy'.*

*I am already showing signs of heading in that direction. I just turned down an invitation to a party. Why? Because I want to minimize potential conflict with Jennifer. For example, 'why didn't you invite me?'... 'who did you meet?' ... 'what happened?'. I just can't be bothered with all that. I don't want the anxiety of her checking up on me, reading in her interpretations, me feeling that I have to explain everything, that I am somehow accountable to her. So I rationalize, 'well, I didn't really want to go anyway'. Once again, I stay on the straight and narrow path, and once again my spirit coils into a rebellious posture at this denial of my freedom. I am letting consideration of someone else direct my thoughts, feelings, desires and actions.*

*In the last week, I have felt myself starting to close up again, shrinking in fear and trembling before the presence of Jennifer's 'Kali' persona.*

\* \* \*

Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Five: Apollo-Soyuz link up in space ... the Baader-Meinhoff gang in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy ... North Vietnam takes over Saigon and the final, ignominious exodus by helicopter from the roof of the U.S. Embassy.

And in the International Year of the Woman, performers like Carly Simon and Roberta Flack sing articulate, tough, intelligent lyrics – like ‘you’re so vain’ and ‘killing me softly’ – to men who strut around in afro hair, platform shoes, and tight-fitting, brightly-colored nylon shirts with wide collars. And what are the guys singing? ‘Let’s get it on’ by Marvin Gaye and ‘Crocodile Rock’ by Elton John.

‘The TV show ‘Maude’ captures the emergent woman of the mid 70’s, assertive, belligerent, barely tolerating her bumbling, subservient mate.

\* \* \*

I didn’t want to go back to University. I felt I had dragged myself there, kicking and screaming all the way. The first thing I did was to set up a regular appointment with a McGill counselor – someone to whom I could vent the inevitable frustrations of being squeezed into an institutional straight-jacket once again.

But at least I was aware of my goals. I wanted to become a Teacher. I wanted to develop a pedagogy that related development of personal values with (a) personal development, (b) social change. And I wanted to discover the tools by which to accomplish this.

Whatever its drawbacks, the summer school course at SGWU, ‘The Limits of Educational Reform’, had helped me clarify and focus my thoughts on education. In particular, it had helped me delineate the differences between the liberal paradigm (a la Paul Gallagher) and the radical paradigm (a la Paul Hoch). There was a continuum from allowing the individual complete freedom to grow (the Summerhill-based, do-your-own-thing, liberal, humanistic model), to reforming the individual (more *mindfulness* – less *mindlessness*), to reforming certain sub-structures (Kozol’s Free Schools and Illich’s ‘De-schooling’), to the ultimate and extreme demand for restructuring the infrastructure of society itself, i.e. major social change / revolution.

I favored a middle road between the radical and liberal paradigms, one that attacked the crisis in education on several fronts, e.g. re-education of teachers, stronger more active teacher unions, improvement of the learning environment, student rights and empowerment, awareness of power differentials, clarification of values. The proposal for C.B.C. on ‘Look In, Look Out’ had helped me clarify that students needed to be orientated to both inner and outer reality. For a student to enter the labor market / real world knowing more about Shakespeare or 18<sup>th</sup>. Century history than about the fundamental workings of government and the economy was more than unfortunate, it was a shocking example of misplaced priorities, and hence mis-education.

I was tired of reading statistics that said that the personality traits most rewarded in High School were those of ‘conformity’ and ‘suppression of aggression’. Whereas those most penalized were ‘curiosity’, ‘creative activities’ and ‘independence of judgment’. I was tired of hearing the conventional rhetoric about our ‘democratic freedoms’. A democratic system was supposed to be based on the notion of individual choice. The whole ideology became a charade when people neither had the values nor the information upon which to make responsible decisions. There *was* a class system, in the U.S. and Canada, as in Britain. The lower your class, the greater the likelihood of denial of access to meaningful jobs, decent income, and relevant information necessary for both survival and success.

At first, McGill presented a number of things that I had both anticipated and dreaded. There were plenty of inexperienced and immature students at least 5-10 years younger than I. There was clear

evidence, in both students and certain teachers of the G.B. Shaw maxim, 'those who can - do, those who can't - teach'. But to my surprise, interesting and exciting vistas were opening up.

I soon discovered that one of my teachers was the kind of role-model I had been looking for. His name was Norman Henchey. His course was called 'The Philosophy of Education'. Henchey told us from the outset that he believed that any teacher worth his/her salt *should* know, and be able to explain their educational philosophy – whether to a parent, student, fellow teacher, or administrator. In the first week, I perused his book list and saw both Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Castaneda's 'Don Juan' books. There was also the improbably titled Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance by Robert Piersig.

Every class with Henchey turned out to be a master class in how to teach – from curriculum design to materials selection, development of teaching techniques to classroom management, etc. His modeling was impeccable, the purpose and direction crystal-clear, the methods sound and workable.

My first paper for him was on the topic 'Values Can and Should be Taught in School'. The second was entitled 'Paulo Freire and Castaneda's Don Juan: a contrast in values, perceptions and goals of 2 educators'.

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator who had succeeded in devising a successful literacy program for Brazilian peasants that, in addition to teaching them how to read and write, raised their critical consciousness such that they became less fatalistic and more motivated to stand up for their rights. He realized that as long as social conditions were unjust, 'humanistic growth' of the individual could only be the preserve of the privileged few. The contradiction between individual rights and collective rights is reflected in the following passage:

*'They (the privileged) could eat, dress, wear shoes, be educated, travel and hear Beethoven, while millions did not eat, had no clothes or shoes, neither studied nor traveled, much less listened to Beethoven. Any restriction on this way of life, in the name of the rights of the community appeared to them as a profound violation of their individual rights, although they had no respect for the millions who suffered and died of hunger, pain, sorrow and despair.'*

Writing this paper clarified for me that Don Juan's teachings, while fascinating and important, were all about taking responsibility for oneself, whereas Freire's teachings were about loving and caring enough about one's fellow-beings to fuse individual responsibility with collective intent for the purpose of social change.

I ended the paper with the following passage:

*'who do you speak for, don Juan?*

*you speak for the lonely misfit in all of us  
the anarchist hatred of rules and structure*

*but we are not ready for anarchism, don Juan  
and society is not ready for you  
your place is on the margin  
in the high chaparral*

*the outsider in my heart embraces you, don Juan  
but my critical consciousness rejects you.'*

In my first semester, I was fortunate enough to get my practicum placement at the only Alternative School within the Protestant School Board system. The school, previously called 'The Alternative High School', had just been re-named by the student body as 'Moving In New Directions' (MIND).

In October, I attended an O.I.S.E. (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) conference in Toronto entitled. 'Alternative Schools within Publicly Supported Systems'. Many of the speakers were cautious about the supposed benefits of Alternative Schools; some were openly critical. There was much talk of 'burn-out'. One speaker pointed out that at the traditional school, the teacher was insulated from the community, from other teachers, and from the students, whereas at the Alternative School, the teacher couldn't avoid confrontation and conflict with other teachers, had to continually justify school and program to the community, and had to have a 100% emotional commitment.

Another speaker skewered the issue of student influence over course content by saying that Alternative Schools had a philosophy of amateurism, i.e. doing something because you like it as opposed to doing something well, and commitment only so long as you remained interested – as opposed to perseverance, hard work and the rewards of accomplishment.

But it felt premature for me to have formed any clear opinions so I was wide open to everything I heard.

MIND was located in a building on Park Avenue near Mount Royal. The Principal was an attractive young woman called Michelle who flirted with me from the onset. The students were, by and large, the children of upper-income WASP and Jewish parents. Many of them were precociously intelligent and had been sent to MIND because they didn't fit in at their traditional high school. The atmosphere at the school was creatively chaotic, reflecting a curious blend of 'student democracy' and the charismatic and matriarchal Michelle. In general, the school was about as far as you could get from my own schooling at Sedbergh. As such, it was a fascinating milieu to test out innovative ideas and methods and to further clarify my own educational philosophy.

At the same time that I was studying at McGill and working at MIND, I went to regular practice sessions with the Stephen Barry Band. We had started getting gigs and from the beginning, the band created a buzz. In addition to Stephen and I, there were three other members; Gordon Adamson on drums, Andrew Cowan on guitar, and Chaim Tannenbaum – lead vocals and harmonica. Stephen, Andrew and Chaim were all well-known on the local music scene. Chaim was good friends with Kate and Anna McGarrigle and was back-up singer on their recordings.

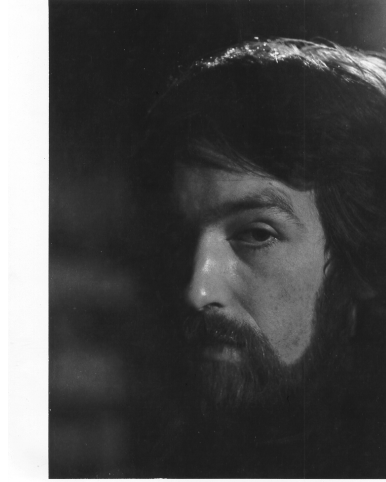
In the month before Christmas 1975, we played several gigs, including a couple at the Rainbow Bar and Grill on McKay, the 'in' venue for local bands.

*Diary Entry: 14/10/75*

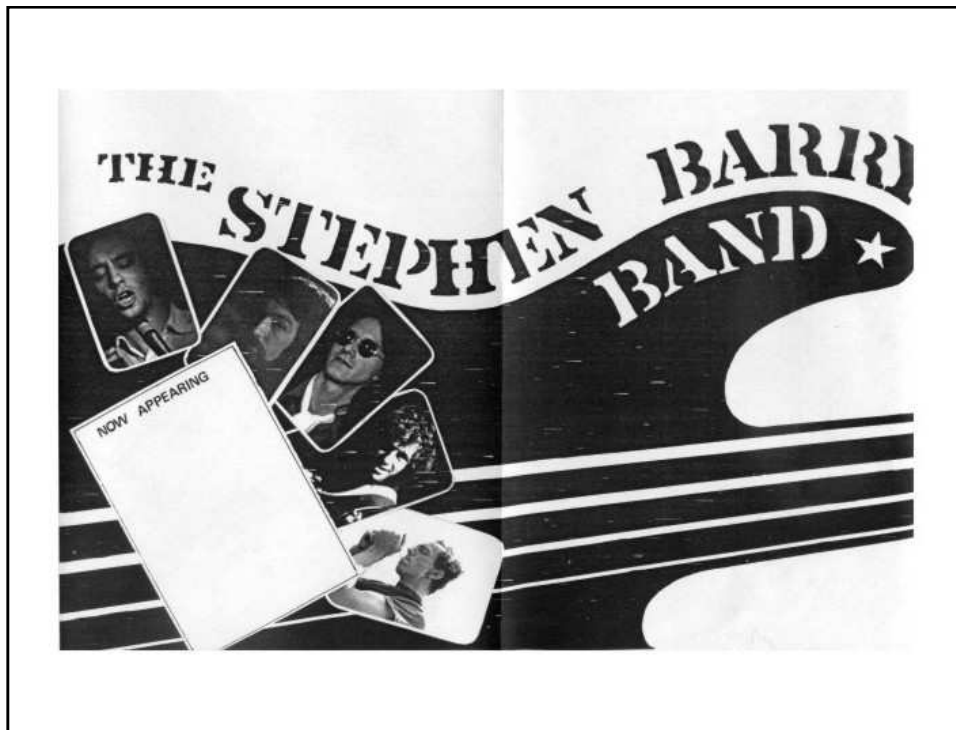
*Barry band at Rainbow. Practically everyone I know in Montreal was there – Joy, Jennifer, Howard, Roger, Paul Hoch, even Jerry who had just returned from London with his new wife, Lisa. On the one hand, the recognition, even adulation, is nice – the adrenaline rush of suddenly being in the spotlight. On the other hand, I resent, more than words can say, the way in which 'nobody knows you when you're down and out' but everybody embraces you when you're successful on a public stage ... when all of a sudden, you are 'up and in'. How easy to get recognition for being able to play a few blues chords. My life has gone from unemployment and despair to hyperactivity and multiple goals. Now, I have no time for writing and have had to shelve my play, 'The Interview'.*



*I miss writing. I so desperately need detachment in order to see the larger picture. Without that, I so easily get pulled in different directions. I lose my center. I need 'the writer' to mediate between the warm, involved (& sweaty) teacher and the cool, guarded musician.*



The 'cool' musician picture was used for our band poster. From left to right, that's Chaim, me, Gordon, Andrew and Stephen.





## 15.

When I was a 12 year old at The Edinburgh Academy, a teacher had written in a school report, 'he suffers from over-conscientiousness'. He was right. However, at the age of 29, I still found the issue confusing. For example, when I received a letter from my mother that said how she was reading books aloud to my father because it was "selfish" to read by herself (he was now completely blind from glaucoma), the line between conscientious responsibility and overdoing it remained blurred.

This confusion continued to play out in my relationship with Jennifer. At Christmas we went to Moncton with Krista to spend a few days at Jennifer's mother's house. There we were, the very image of a couple and a family, while back in Montreal, we continued to live in separate residences. We continued to struggle to define a volatile formula of physical separation and emotional conjoinment. I continued to be torn between my commitment to 'the relationship' and my need not to be suffocated by it. While feeling that I 'loved' Jennifer, I wasn't even sure that I was attracted to her.

She continued her social worker program at Dawson and I reveled in the fact that I had survived one semester at McGill and only had one more to go before I was a qualified teacher. Krista had spent the summer with her father, Ted, in New Orleans and was now in grade 1 at elementary school. My babysitting responsibilities were over and I began to question when, if ever, I would become a father myself. I was nearly 30. It was beginning to seem as if I'd missed the boat. There had been a couple of times that Jennifer could have become pregnant by me and didn't, and I began to wonder if I was infertile. Eventually, I went to the doctor's for a sperm-count test. The next day, I was assured that I had a very high sperm count, which meant, as I understood it, that I had an over-abundance of the lusty little buggers just raring to go. But with Jennifer? I wanted to have a child but it didn't seem to make sense to have one with a woman for whom I had such contradictory feelings.

\* \* \*

In January, I resumed my teaching at MIND. I taught a course that I had put together myself entitled 'Teaching Social Studies through Drama'. The course was a kind of amalgam of the Stanislavski method and '*verstehen*' sociology. Students had to select a certain kind of person who aroused their interests. Then they had to explore the inner and outer aspects of this person by observation and interview. The course was quite successful, much more so than the 'Bill's Troupe' experience at Dawson. The students were motivated, no-one dropped out, and I could sense a growing basis of trust, respect and affection that all nourished my growing confidence as a teacher.

I encouraged one student to explore his chosen 'down and out' character by meeting him out of class and showing him around the seedier parts of St. Lawrence. I also gave him the David Marvin article to read, and Evelyn Puxley's Poverty in Montreal.

Another student said she was interested in Aboriginal Indians. I put her in touch with Margaret Horn, a Mohawk who was doing the same program as Jennifer at Dawson.

Meanwhile, the Stephen Barry Band continued to gain popularity. Most weekends we would have a gig. I didn't have an electronic keyboard but I did have the full size, reconditioned, Mason and

Rich upright that I had bought while working at Dawson. So every Friday, the boys in the band would turn up at my house on St. Dominique and we would drag, lift, wrestle and haul my 800 pound piano down the rickety front stairs and into a U-haul trailer. On one occasion, going down St. Lawrence towards De Maisonneuve, the trailer attachment came loose, and we narrowly avoided a major catastrophe of an out-of-control Mason and Rich accelerating like a missile down the Main.

Our sound equipment was rudimentary and we had no monitors. I was getting used to coming home at 2 or 3 a.m. with fingers like pulpy bananas, the result of incessant pounding of the keyboard so that I could hear myself. We played mostly blues, with some rock and country thrown in. Our repertoire included songs like Robert Johnson's 'Kindhearted Woman', 'Sporting Life Blues' and 'How Long Blues', wrenching slow blues tunes that brought up my pain to such an extent that sometimes I had tears flowing down my cheeks as I played. Then there was the gospel song 'God Knows How Much We Can Bear', that we would play in the wee hours of the morning – a number that would see Chaim, reborn with evangelical fervor (and single malt), uplifting an audience into reverential silence. It happened time and again and was extraordinary to experience. Chaim was cerebral as a philosopher and visceral as a singer. He delivered slow blues with an aching authenticity and he could belt out barrel-house tunes like 'Oh Papa' or rockers like 'Hound Dog' as convincingly as Bessie Smith or Big Mama Thornton.

Andrew was consistent with his sardonic quips and inconsistent with his guitar solos. He sang on songs like 'Six Days On The Road', with a kind of studied Dylan-Cohen drone-tone. Stephen was rock solid on bass but had a foghorn voice that made a mess of fast paced Chuck Berry Songs like 'Promised Land' and 'Maybelline', but fared better on Mose Allison type material like 'Taking Care of Business'. As far as musical technique, Gordon on drums was ahead of everybody. I was appreciated for my right hand improvised lines on the slow blues, and the kick-ass left hand I used on up-tempo boogies. As a whole, the band had a raw chemistry, an explosive energy that got people excited.

One weekend, we had a gig in Quebec City. This was six months before René Lévesque swept into power with the separatist Parti Québécois. Nationalist fervor was palpable. In Montreal, we'd had a couple of gigs in solidly francophone parts of the city where someone had shouted 'parle en français', so we weren't sure what to expect in the predominantly unilingual capital of the province. But when at the end of the first set on the first day, a man approached me with a glazed look in his eyes and murmured "oh, j'aime les blues", I figured we were O.K.

It was a few weeks later, during a gig at the Rainbow Bar and Grill back in Montreal, that it happened. As I was playing, I became aware of someone leaning against the upright watching me intently. When I looked up to see who it was, I was faced with a brown-eyed woman in a black-leather coat and a red scarf. Our eyes met, re-met, as some mysterious energy was created and transmitted. Ten minutes later, she was still there and the connection grew stronger. At the break, we talked. It turned out that her name was Ya-el and she had gone to school with Andrew and Chaim. She was a teacher and an artist, and on top of that, I soon discovered that she had an irresistible combination of empathy and black humor. For the first time in my life, I got an insight into the term 'love at first sight'.

We became lovers shortly after that gig. Ya-el lived in Outrement, not far from the location of MIND. We would get together at her neat, tasteful apartment after our respective teaching days. I was in heaven. Here was a woman who laughed at my jokes (and more importantly at me), who made me laugh with her razor wit, with whom I could talk education, who loved my piano playing, who was a graphic artist of real ability, and whose eyes were laughing and serious, receptive and intelligent.

I didn't tell Jennifer about our relationship at first. I didn't feel obliged to. Our 'contract' was defined as sexually 'open', so long as we were not cohabiting.

One day, I received a letter from my mother. In it were enclosed some newspaper cuttings that showed three images of men she thought had looked like me. At the time I thought, "hey Mum, you

crazy, woman". Now I look at the pictures and I say "well they ain't me, and they ain't my twin, but I see the resemblance ...hey Mum, you alright, gal! "



Victory hug for Douglas Burgess of Edinburgh, from his mother, after he won £500 and a gold medal as first home in the Skol 110-metre sprint at Meadowbank yesterday.



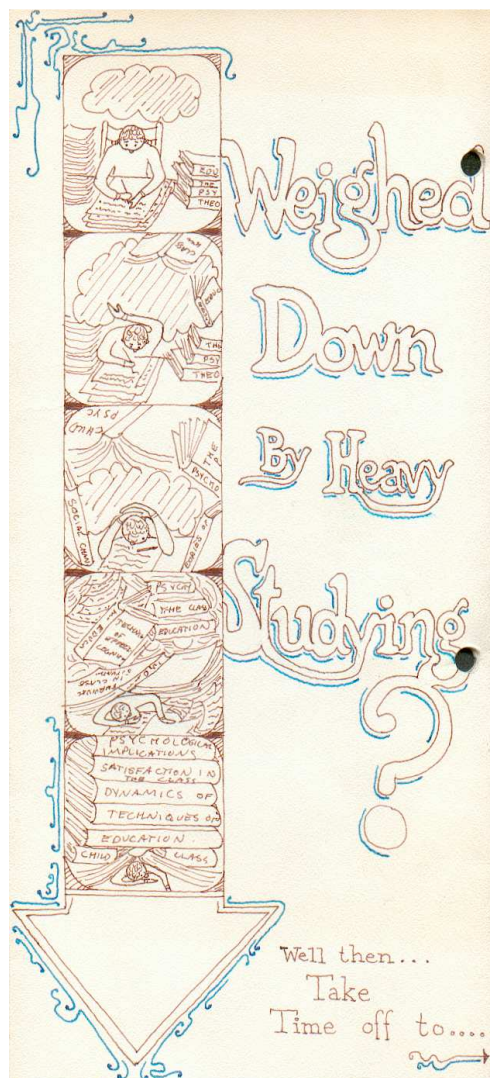
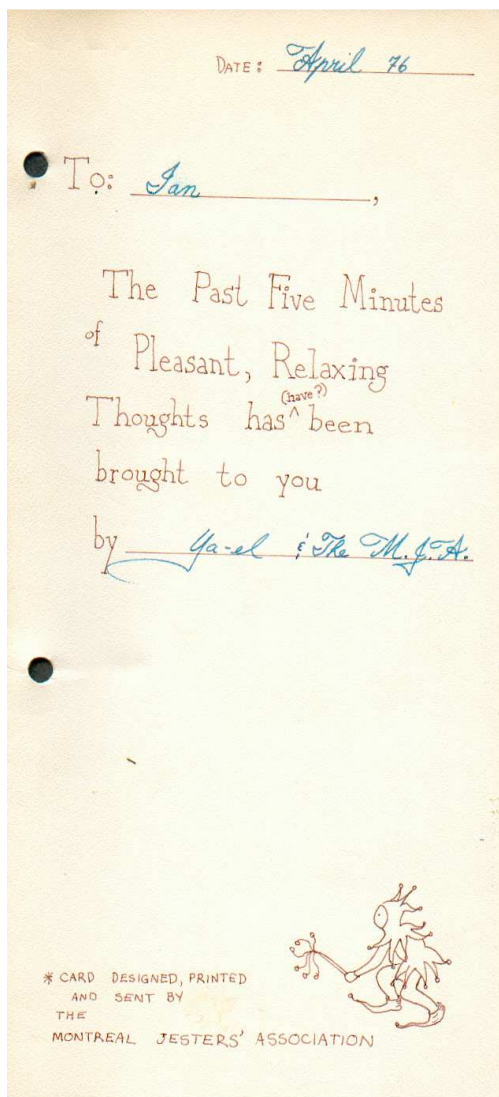
These are examples sent to me by my Mum of her 'seeing double'. In this case, 3 doubles or 'look-alikes' of me.

*family-gathering*  
 I have stopped toying with the idea that Daddly is an identical twin. It would be entirely too incredible. Doubles & identical twins must have problems & to be a twin or a double is no crime. So why worry! Those who have Faith are indeed blessed! Write soon lots of love Mum

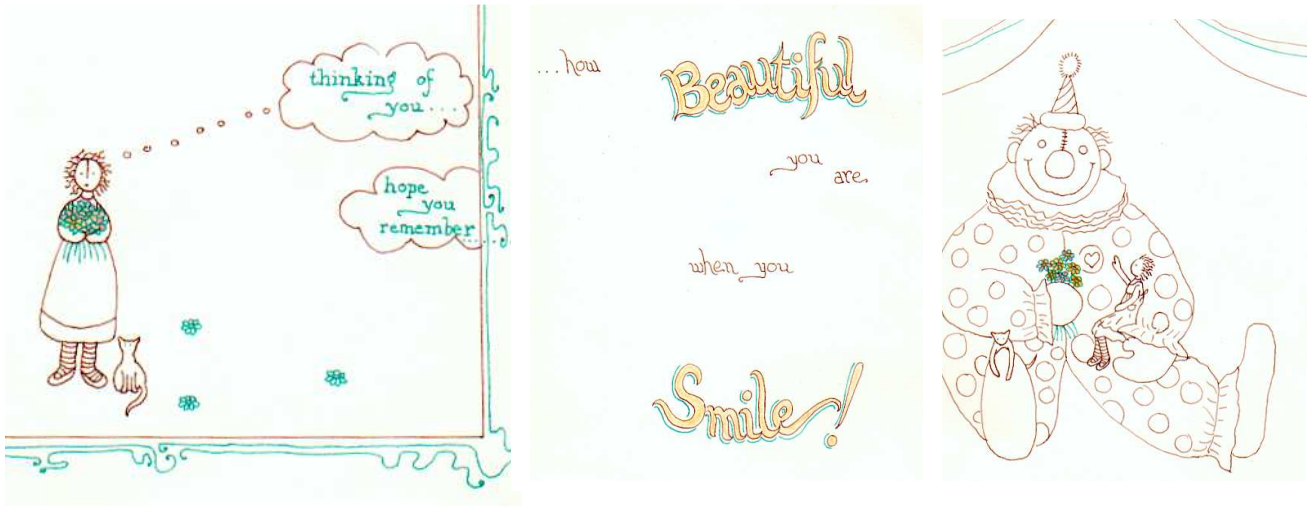
Suddenly, it was Spring and with its onset, I woke up to the fact that I had almost completed my Diploma in Education at McGill. The struggles of the past few years appeared to be over, or at least receding. To some extent, successfully completing this Diploma erased painful memories of dropping out of L.S.E. My teaching at MIND had gone well and I had received very good evaluations. Michelle had told me that there was a good chance that I would have a position there in the Fall. More immediately, I was to take over another teacher's class for the months of May to July – not as a student but as a paid teacher.

I continued to meet with Ya-el and then one day she told me that she had been accepted into the Masters in Education Program at O.I.S.E. I didn't want her to go, but on another level it was O.K. It certainly simplified the situation with respect to Jennifer, and I had eyed the same Masters program at O.I.S.E. myself. I knew I needed to put thoughts of a Masters aside (including the Program at S.G.W.U.) and get a few years' experience in the classroom, and make a little money while I was at it so that I could pay off student loans and the suchlike. However, there was no denying that I had the bug to go westwards.

In between our meetings, Ya-el sent me cards. This was one to help me through the last days at McGill:



And this was another card that she sent a few days later:



Meanwhile, the band was becoming ever more popular and in demand. I was beginning to be told that I was one of the best blues pianists in Montreal, if not *the* best. I had even been hit upon by Anna McGarrigle one night at the Rainbow, before she was protectively ushered home by her husband Dane Lanken and her sister Kate. We had started playing at 'The Rising Sun' on Ste. Catherine's, opposite Places Des Arts. The club was run by a big black dude from French Guinea named Dou-Dou Boisel and it was where the likes of John Lee Hooker and Miles Davis would play when they were in town.

The spring and summer of 1976 in Montreal had the same kind of manic, hyperventilating energy that I remembered during Expo '67 when I had worked in the British Pavilion. Everything seemed in flux. Everything was on an upswing, and after being in the trough so long, I was up surfing on the crest of the wave. In July, I became a Canadian Citizen (I crossed my fingers in silent protest when I had to swear allegiance to 'Her Majesty'). I was suddenly a qualified teacher and a successful musician. In one year, I had gone from a nobody to a somebody, at least relatively speaking. The people who came to see the band respected me. People who'd seen me struggle through the McGill program respected me. And the students that I'd taught respected me.

It was too good to last. The descent started when I learned that there was no position open at MIND for the Fall. In July, when I finished teaching at MIND, I was eligible once again for U.I. – which was financially good of course, but psychologically triggered 'unemployment blues' syndrome once again. Meanwhile, my desire to stay with the band was taking a beating.

Bands are like families, only the contradictions are out in the open. Like families, they are not usually egalitarian. They have a hierarchical power structure and while the junior members have input, the important decisions are made by the leader and his cohorts. In our band, Stephen was The King, Andrew was the power behind the throne, and Chaim was the prima donna. Gordon and I were bona fide members of the Court – respected, consulted, praised, but ultimately with little decision-making power.

Who gets to sing in a band? With the Beatles, it was John and Paul with George on the side, and Ringo once in a while, as a special favor. With the Stones, it was Mick Jagger front and center, with Keith Richard as back up. With Led Zeppelin, it was Robert Plant way out in front. In our case, Chaim was front and center, with Stephen and Andrew as back up. There was 'no room' for any other singers.

Then there were all the decisions about what gigs to accept, how to promote the band, what material to do, what image to present, etc. However, the biggest source of contention always had to do with equipment – specifically, who had the power of clear amplification, and who didn't?

Stephen and Andrew had no reason to complain in this department. They each had their own guitar amp in addition to coming through the PA system. Chaim was usually happy enough. As lead singer, the sound checks had to make sure that his mike was working well so that the volume of his singing and harmonica playing would be 'front and center'. Gordon, of course, being the drummer, could regulate his amplification quite easily. I was the one who felt like the victim.

For quite a while, the piano wasn't amplified at all. Then, finally, I bought my own microphone and made sure the piano was miked at the back, near the soundboard. This made a big difference and on slow numbers, I could usually hear myself well enough. But a lot of the time, I was drowned out by the collective volume of the other instruments. Not that the audience necessarily perceived it that way. What I heard on stage was not what the audience heard from the big P.A. speakers, which were facing them. This just complicated matters because it had the potential for casting doubt on my complaint. For example, many times we would finish the first set and, exasperated, I would say, "I can't hear myself", to which a band member or member of the audience would say, "I can hear you fine".

My frustration grew into resentment, and eventually a desire to quit the band. In particular, I resented Andrew's overpowering volume on lead guitar, as well as his seeming insensitivity to working out a better balance.

Then there were other more subtle frictions that concerned 'territorial imperatives' such as not crossing lines as far as women were concerned. There is no doubt that I was sensitive and on guard in this area. The issues of abandonment and betrayal were like open sores following my experiences with Leslie and Ellie. I had become more vigilant and protective against repetition of these very painful experiences. The other relevant issue that was at the core of my being was the matter of not getting credit where credit was due. I was becoming sick of doing the work and having others reap the rewards. And I was opposed to the glorification of the musician as opposed to the under-valuation of the teacher.

The combination of feeling powerless due to once again being unemployed, and the sense of not really having any control in the band, led me to writing a poem entitled 'Piano Player'.

*Powerlessness is not being heard  
Not being heard by the audience*

*Powerlessness is not having one's voice heard  
Having suggestions, criticisms, opinions  
Ignored or not taken seriously*

*Powerlessness turns to fury  
When I say 'I can't hear myself'  
And Andrew says 'I can hear you fine'  
And then turns up his volume  
So that his guitar screams ego-power*



*Powerlessness is face to the piano  
Back to the band  
Hidden from the audience  
110% effort from the fingers  
Producing 10% reward from the P.A.*

*Power only has one place in music  
And that is between the players  
Shared amongst them  
And between them and the audience*

*Power aimed at each other is abuse*

And, as usual, my best defense against a feeling of powerlessness was writing. I wrote the following poem, 'Writing As A Band Aid', in my diary in between sets after a particularly bad experience of feeling like I had to pound the piano in order to hear myself followed by a fruitless overture to the band to find a better balance.

*Sitting, watching, recording  
Head down  
Hand and mind working  
Information flowing in but not out*

*Inscrutable*

*I want to make them think  
I don't care  
Me  
Writing with head down  
Makes them think  
'What is he doing  
I wonder'*

*When powerless  
You need mystery, intrigue  
And a proactive posture*

*If you wait for them  
To do or say something  
You will wait and wait  
And simmer and stew  
Until you spit out a reaction*

*The fatal mistake?  
To blow up  
The ultimate admission  
Of failure  
Failure to be in control of oneself*

*So ...  
Wait ...  
Wait for an opening  
Devise strategies  
Be prepared*

*Don't ask questions  
Shut yourself off  
Close yourself up  
Remain aloof  
Don't worry about what they think  
That's none of your business*

*Act mindfully when the time is right  
And meanwhile  
Blow up  
If you must  
But, on paper*

*They'll come to you  
Just wait  
They'll come to you  
Just wait  
They'll come to you  
Just wait*

*Be invisible  
Be hard to get  
Be the loner*

*Give yourself time  
Give yourself time  
Give yourself time*

\* \* \*

Ya-el was gone and I missed her. Judging by her letters from Toronto, she was missing me too:

Letter from Ya-el; 7/7/76

*"I am still numb from the move. I cried and slept the whole way here. I tried to phone you before I left to apologize for Tuesday night. No excuses - only reasons. I was physically ill and my morale was generally undermined. Also there were conflicting feelings. When there is too much conflict within me, my mind and emotions seize completely. I feel but can't relate. I get totally blocked. I wanted so much to have a warm, beautiful evening ... to laugh with you and leave with a nod and a smile (a true Spartan woman!). But then I weakened and got lachrymose and tried to fight that. I*

*wanted to tell you in fact how much you mean to me, and at the sorrow within me of leaving. And then, I was so wrapped up in my miseries that I couldn't sense you and I began to feel very distant, small and panicky ... and so on, back and forth, round and round, until snap – I could do nothing, say nothing. All that emerged were some abortive attempts at love-making, some puerile sniveling.*

*Well, that's all in the past. Here I am now – new city, new apartment, old me, feeling awkward. Wish I could share with you the myriad rainbows that dance around the shower window in the morning sun. Wish I could hold you close,*

*Love Ya-el.*



## 16.

At the end of August, around the time that Elvis died, I quit the band. I don't know what Andrew and Gordon felt but Stephen was very upset – especially because, unbeknownst to me, Chaim had also just decided to quit.

I had grown fond of Stephen and I knew how he must feel. But I had had enough. I had chosen to be a teacher, and a teacher I would be, one way or another.

It wasn't simply that I was unemployed; there just weren't any jobs. I had got to the point, as I checked the Montreal Star ads, of seriously looking at the possibility of taking a teaching job way up north – they were the only teaching positions available, and even these were few and far between.

Then, out of the blue, at the beginning of September, I got a call from the McGill Placement Office, informing me that there was a position open at Laval Catholic High School for a Special Education teacher. I wasn't sure I wanted to work in Laval, or as a full-time Special Ed. teacher. But the die was cast. I took the job.

Laval Catholic High School (L.C.H.S.) was different from MIND in every way. Whereas MIND was a small experimental school in the heart of the city, L.C.H.S. was a huge, sprawling traditional High School in the industrial and commercial wasteland of Laval, north of Montreal. For the first month, I had to get to and from work by public transit – first the Metro to the terminus at Henri Bourassa, and from there a bus to Carrefour Laval, the consumer paradise of a shopping centre close to the school.

In the first few days, I was orientated by my two fellow teachers in the Special Ed. department.

“The other students refer to our department as ‘the zoo’ and the occupants as ‘the animals’,” explained Tony Romano.

“Quite a few teachers too,” interjected John Cassidy, a calm, kindly-looking man.

“And sometimes that's what it feels like,” continued Tony Romano. “But when they get out of hand, you just send them off for a little visit to see Mr. Lemieux, the Principal,” he added.

The majority of the Special Education students were Italian-speaking and ‘Mr. Romano’ was the Godfather – he had respect. Montreal was a city in which successive waves of immigrants had migrated northwards over the years. In my home base of Prince Arthur, I was told that the Jews had been replaced by Italians, then Greeks, then Portuguese, and most recently counter-cultural white folks like myself. The Italians had moved north in stages, and sizable Italian community had grown in Laval.

Tony Romano looked and acted like Barbarino or Fonzie from the TV series ‘Happy Days’ – street-wise, ‘cool’, full of macho bravado and put-you-in-your-place quips. John Cassidy was older, in his mid 40's perhaps – a soft-spoken Scotsman whose considerate nature was taken advantage of by some students in a way that Romano wasn't. However, he was experienced enough to know how to handle it. If I needed information or advice, I found I gravitated towards John Cassidy rather than Tony Romano.

I had been hired to teach English, Crafts and Drama. It soon became clear that there was no curriculum and that I could do whatever I wanted with the students. I had fourteen students in my class. Of these, six were Italian-Canadians and five were French-Canadians. Why the latter were at an English speaking High School in the first place, was something I never did find out. It made no sense to me. Maybe they had been ‘behavior problems’ in their francophone High School and had been shipped off to L.C.H.S. as punishment. Or maybe their parents were opposed to the recent election of René Levesque and the Parti Québécois and were using their children as a federalist statement. Who knows? But as with other francophones obliged to speak English, there was a sullen air of resentment with some

of them, in particular a fifteen year old named Normand.

Normand became the most potent challenge to my fledgling behavior management techniques. From the beginning, he realized that here was a ‘soft’ new teacher – one who openly stated that what happened in the classroom was between him and the students and that he didn’t believe in a policy of sending ‘offenders’ to the Principal. Normand took it upon himself to test just how flexible my limits were. He skipped classes, he left early, his manner and tone was off-hand and, at times, rude and confrontational.

I was determined to gain the students’ trust as a precursor to authentic learning. Using the Chief as my enforcer was not going to help me attain that objective. At McGill, we had talked about behavior management problems, and that is where I heard about ‘learning contracts’ as a way of rationalizing student responsibility and accountability. I knew that the approach I was taking required two stages. The first was to assess the situation and gradually clarify classroom rules. The second was to put repeat offenders of the class’s ‘reasonable’ rules on a learning contract in which the consequences of further transgressions were spelled out, including *at this stage*, the possibility of bringing the Principal into the picture.

By the beginning of October, I had clarified to myself and to the students what I was offering. I asked to students to state their preferences in writing between (1) Art (painting, drawing, sculpture, mural painting); (2) Music (piano, guitar, singing, song-writing); (3) ‘Language Skills through Games’ (word games such as Scrabble, Probe and Password – “to help you read and spell better, as well as develop your vocabulary, to be followed by writing a story from the words you have formed”); (4) Drama and Communication (projects using tape-recorder, developmental drama, etc.)

By the end of October, I had presented the Classroom Rules to the students – again, in writing.



### **CLASSROOM RULES**

1. *Be in class on time*
2. *If you decide to skip class, then you must be prepared to accept the consequences, i.e. if you are on a learning contract which states that attendance is compulsory, then the consequence of your skipping class will be action from me.*  
*If you are not on a contract, then I will not force you to come to class. I will hope that you do. But if you do not, and you wander around the school, you must realize that this is going against the rules of the school, i.e. the rule that says you must go to class whether you like it or not – in short, education is compulsory. If you are questioned by the Principal or another Teacher as to why you are not in class, you can say that I have not insisted that you be in class, but that I have explained that you should not be on school premises if you are not going to class.*
3. *Hopefully, I will meet your learning interests and needs in such a way that you will not want to skip, but if you do, you know where I stand.*
4. *Once a class is in progress, if you need to leave for some valid reason, e.g. going to the toilet, you must ask permission from me.*
5. *No fighting or fooling around that is disruptive to the learning activities of others.*
6. *If you are not prepared to respect or accept these rules, I shall ask you to sign a statement to this effect, giving the reasons for your decision. A copy of this statement will be sent to Mr. Lemieux and your parents.*

By the middle of November, I had presented Normand with my (and his) first Learning Contract.

**LEARNING CONTRACT**

*I agree to follow a course in Music with Mr. Brown for the next 5 weeks (Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> – Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1976).*

*I understand that this course of studies is based on my own preference.*

*I understand that the idea of a learning contract is to share responsibility for my learning.*

*I accept responsibility for my learning by agreeing to work cooperatively with my fellow students and with my teacher, Mr. Brown.*

*I understand that Mr. Brown will, at all times, accept any helpful suggestions as to what could happen in the course, but that he will not accept complaints, or refusals to do what has already been agreed upon, or disruptions in class.*

*I accept that Mr. Brown has the final word on what happens in class.*

*I understand that I am expected to work at the following activities and to achieve certain goals connected with them:*

Activities:

- (1) 2 individual lessons at piano or guitar each week*
- (2) Task: bring in record of your choice and write out words to a favorite song, Then learn to sing and play song with Mr. Brown.*
- (3) Practice ensemble singing (both unison and harmony)*
- (4) Write your own song*
- (5) Participate in musical production with the rest of the group.*

*I understand that if I break this contract (through complaints, disruptions, absence, or failure to do assigned work), I accept the consequence, which is a meeting with my mother and/or father, Mr. Brown, and I.*

Signed: .....

Date: .....

I wasn't completely 'green' any more. I knew that my 'fair' approach would likely result in an ordeal by fire, but I figured that this was the price I had to pay in order to set up a meaningful learning environment.

There was one student who intrigued me. His name was George Villa. Although I never met them, I knew his parents were from Argentina. George appeared to have several learning disabilities. He couldn't read or write very well and showed disinterest in virtually all subjects and activities. He wasn't overtly disruptive but from time to time he would explode in verbal self-defense when the teasing got too much. And he was teased on a daily basis.

George wasn't shy and he didn't appear to be afraid. He was just different, uniquely different. George had one overriding passion that eclipsed everything else – and that was anything and everything to do with space exploration. His knowledge in this area was simply astounding. George knew the personal biographies of all the Apollo astronauts. He knew technical details of the Apollo rockets. He knew the exact distance from the earth to the moon, and the nearest planets.

As with some of the other kids in my class, I suspected that there was an abusive family situation at home. I knew George was afraid of his father. As I started to get to know him, I felt that he needed to be sheltered, supported, validated.

If his wormhole vision into the infinities of space was a symptom of autism, so what? All I knew was that he shouldn't be robbed of his passion, and that his interests could and should be channeled in a constructive direction. Paulo Freire, my hero, had taught political awareness through reading and writing, and vice-versa. In turn, I was sure that George could be taught the 3 R's through his interest in space exploration.

\* \* \*

In October, Jerry Lach, my friend from London and Expo '67 days, told me that he knew of a fairly decent car that I could buy cheap. The daily trek to Laval and back was becoming too arduous, especially with the cold weather setting in. I knew nothing about car mechanics and Jerry's recommendation was good enough for me. I bought the car, a Ford Falcon, for \$200. For the first time since Kingston in 1969, I had my own means of transportation. The Falcon had an 8 cylinder engine and I enjoyed the sense of power as I roared back and forth on the Decarie Expressway.

After years of scraping to get by, I finally had some disposable income. One of the first things I did was to tell Jennifer that I wanted to give her a percentage of my monthly income. I believed in equality and that led me to a belief in redistribution of wealth. Something had shifted in my relationship with Jennifer. Despite my envy and resentment over Jennifer's trip to Europe, it had broadened and deepened her. She not only had visited Edinburgh and my parents' house, but had, in her words, "fallen in love with my mother." We had things to talk about. Her studies at Dawson had sharpened her mind and strengthened her political activism. Yael was in Toronto and although I still felt we should be together, the fact was that I had committed myself to a one year teaching contract in Quebec, and I still felt an emotional loyalty to working on and working out my relationship with Jennifer. I needed Jennifer's support – for my job at Laval and for my return to the music scene, this time as a solo performer. I had started doing solo piano improvisations at the Yellow Door and the response had been very good. Now the challenge was to start singing, and writing my own songs.

I had suggested to Jennifer that we make a new start and that the best way to do this was to have a weekly 'session', in which we would methodically review everything that had happened in our relationship to date, in an attempt to clear the cobwebs and remove any skeletons hiding in the closet. By the middle of October, after 3 or 4 sessions, it was clear that we were drawing closer to each other. Jennifer had moved into a house on St. André and that is where we would have our sessions on Friday evenings. As we aired things out and allowed a free flow of emotional expression, it started to be natural to 'celebrate' our work session with a fun session of eating, drinking wine and sexual aerobics.

Meanwhile, my constant companions at St Dominique were Roger and Josh. Since Jennifer had made the move from Coloniale to St. André and I had started my full-time job in Laval, Josh had been stuck in the house. I felt guilty that I was neglecting him. When I got the car, one of the first things I wanted to do was to take Josh out to the country and let him run free. In the summer, I had gone bicycling on my own through the Eastern Townships. I had good memories of that trip and one day I asked Jennifer if she would like to come with me and Josh to a place called Ayer's Cliff and we could spend a night in the motel there.

It was a Saturday – the 23<sup>rd</sup>. October, a glorious sunny Fall day – and in high spirits, Jennifer, Josh and I set off on our trip. We left after lunch and arrived at our destination mid-afternoon. After



checking into the motel, we had something to eat and then set off with Josh to explore the environs of the nearby lake. When we reached the beach, we threw sticks into the water and an ecstatic Josh bounded in and out of the water to retrieve them. By the time we finally set off back to the motel, it was getting quite dark. Josh had been off leash all this time and when we reached the road that took us back a short way to the motel, I felt it was OK for him to make his own way on the verge. There had been few cars passing by and there didn't seem to be a problem. Jennifer and I were rapt in conversation when suddenly, I heard the high-pitched sound of a motor. Then everything happened all at once. I called for Josh, who was ahead of me. He turned his head, and was blinded by the headlights of a fast-approaching vehicle. Before I had a chance to do anything, Josh stepped into the road, and with a sickening thud, the car smashed into him, and we watched helplessly as his body lifted into the air – as if in slow motion – and fell lifeless to the road. The occupants of the car that had hit him, got out distressed by what had happened, but there was nothing they could do. It wasn't their fault. It was my fault. I could, I *should* have had him on the leash.

Still not wanting to accept that he was really dead, I ran off to the motel to call a vet. But as I went, I could hear Jennifer shouting, "it's no good, he's gone". I was gripped by feelings that I had never experienced before. I was traumatized. All I knew was that if Josh, my darling dog, was truly dead, we had to bury him. At the motel, I borrowed a shovel and when I got back, Jennifer and I moved Josh's body into a quiet spot off the road. In a kind of frenzy, I kept hacking at the frozen ground with the shovel until I had dug a pit deep enough to take Josh. Eventually, we lay him in the ground and stood staring at him, paying our last respects I suppose. I felt an overwhelming urge to leave something of myself with him. I took off my leather belt – a present from Jennifer, and a Mexican ring that I was fond of, and placed them on Josh's stiff body. Jennifer took off her suede jacket and laid that over him. Then, I covered him with earth and we said our goodbyes.

I had never before experienced grief. In the days that followed, the floodgates opened and I cried and cried as I experienced the anguish of losing one that I loved so dearly and who had been cut down in his prime. I had so wanted to repay Josh for all the affection and loyalty he had shown me.



This is Josh and I at the back of 3522 St. Dominique, a few months before he died.

I remember you and miss you, my dear friend.

Josh's death brought our little family – Jennifer, Krista and I, closer together. *We* had lost a brother and a son.

Josh's death tapped into a huge well of pain inside me that I didn't even know was there. I wasn't just feeling emotional grief over the loss of Josh, I was also grieving other experiences of loss, neglect and abandonment. I so badly wanted and needed to be part of a loving, caring family – one that offered unswerving loyalty to each other, one that had a foundation of trust, respect and loving care, one that cared for both truth and happiness, and as such, one in which members could laugh and play. Jennifer and I

didn't really play. But Krista and I did. We always had – just like with Josh.

\* \* \*

## *JOSH – IN MEMORIUM*

*my dear dear josh  
thank-you for your loyalty  
unswerving and constant  
thank-you for your playfulness  
and your patience*

*I so much wanted  
to share with you  
and care for you  
I wanted and needed  
you by my side*

*you were my friend  
my companion  
my baby  
you were mine  
I was yours  
and because of that  
I was not and could not be  
begrudging of affection  
shown to others*

*you made me feel  
you gave me hope  
you made me believe  
you shared my loneliness*

*you were able to make me  
laugh, chuckle, wonder  
admire, curse, embrace  
run with you, jump with you  
lie down with you*

*dear beautiful josh  
I cannot replace you  
I can only grieve you and  
honor your memory and  
believe your spirit lives on*

*dear, sweet josh  
my heart breaks over the loss of you*

## 17.

In the aftermath of Josh's death, I began to spend more time at Jennifer's house on St. André. At my place, the awareness of his absence continued to spark off deep feelings of grief.

Over the summer, Jennifer had knitted me a white turtle-neck sweater. I felt deeply grateful for all the time and care she had put into it. She was in her second year at Dawson College and had a practicum placement at the St. Urbain Community Settlement. Given that I now had a decent income and she was still on a student loan, it seemed a good time to put my money where my mouth was, meaning that I re-distribute some of my income to help pay her rent. I proposed that I pay her \$100 a month and in return I would have use of the basement room. Jennifer agreed and we decided to turn the room into a work space where we would both be able to do hands-on projects like weaving and woodworking in addition to having a neutral zone for our regular Friday evening sessions. Jennifer had given me a book on kite making and I set about making a kite for Krista.

I had encouraged Krista's relationship with her natural father Ted. She had spent the summer of 1976 with him in Louisiana, his home. But that didn't mean I didn't want to spend time with her too. I did, and we did. She was suddenly at an age where I could do things with her like throw frisbee and take her on bike rides:

But the biggest gesture of commitment from my side was to write a song for Jennifer, about her and about us. The lyrics ended up being a 'blind faith' statement of my feeling of *having to* believe in our relationship, in spite of evidence that seemed to undermine it.



### **SONG FOR JENNIFER**

*Yes, we've been together such a long long time  
That sometime I wonder why  
Yes, we've been together such a long long time  
That sometimes I want to cry  
But deep inside I know that if I wait  
The reason will come clear  
Why we've been together such a long long time  
So here's to you my dear.*

*Well it sure ain't perfect, we both know that  
And often it ain't even good  
And many's the time that I've thought to myself  
That all that's left is a 'should'*

*And many's the time that all I did want  
Was to laugh at what was done  
But I do believe it's still not too late  
So come here babe, let's find the sun*

*There's one last thing I just gotta get out  
It's to do with what's left to save  
Sure it hurts to think of what we took  
But there's strength from what we gave  
Listen, I just couldn't bear it if the searching stopped  
Ain't ready to give up yet  
I don't give a damn if it ain't the crowning ideal  
Because I believe it's the best*

I resolved to sing it to her at The Yellow Door some time before Christmas.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile at Laval Catholic High School, I was struggling to maintain control – both of my class and myself. The student-centered approach of trying to respond to my class's interests and needs on an individual basis, had led to a three-ring circus that was rapidly draining my reserves of energy. It was my first experience of how sub-grouping, streaming and individualized learning, although great in theory, was *much* harder to realize in practice.

Normand had been on his learning contract for a few weeks but continued to skip classes. One day, he challenged me in the corridor outside the classroom. My built-up frustration spilled over and I grabbed him by the shirt and told him that I didn't want him in my class at all for the rest of that week, or until such time that he was prepared to change his attitude. I could see that he was shocked – teachers weren't supposed to do this. This incident shook me up to the extent of making me see Mr. Lemieux in order to tell him that I was considering the possibility of quitting.

I didn't see Normand for over a week until one day he appeared and asked me if he could rejoin the class. He seemed somewhat chastened and I knew that this was a time to be supportive. It was the first indication that my ordeal by fire was coming to an end and that I was gaining a deeper level of respect and trust. However, I still felt close to throwing in the towel.

One of the things that held me back was that I felt I had something to prove to my mother. In our letter correspondence, we had got into a discussion about the nature of 'success'. It started with my mother saying that it was all very well 'looking down', but that it was also important to 'look up' to symbols of success. She gave as an example my Uncle Vincent, and added that he was a man that she admired. Vincent Jobson was the second husband of my Auntie Mollie. He was a self-made millionaire and the owner of Qualcast, a large iron industry that manufactured Atco lawnmowers. I had responded to this by saying that in my opinion, the most important criterion of success was to succeed as a person in your own right and on your own terms.

However, despite these brave words, as the November snows set in, I was *very* conscious of my upcoming 30<sup>th</sup>. birthday, and the way in which it seemed to highlight the failures and frustrations of my twenties. Ten years earlier, I was the golden boy and my brother Robin was 'the failure'. Now, in my parents' eyes, it was a toss-up. Robin had recently returned broken and destitute from South Africa and was staying with my parents in Edinburgh.

This is Robin in his own words:

Letter from Robin: 10/9/76 – Johannesburg

Dear Mum,

*Many thanks for your letter. Over the past few months, I have finally come face to face with myself and have stripped away all the masks. One of the things I have discovered about myself is the lack of self-discipline and the inability to keep my personal emotions outside my jobs which have, as a result, failed over the years. I am now in a very similar state to what I was in 1971 with very little money left, no job over the past two months (owing to an economic decline and the increasing riots which are getting worse) and at last the realization that I have finally managed to hang myself on my own foolishness and lack of planning ... I am not sufficiently capable of withstanding the rigors of this country and realize now the necessity of facing facts and living within my means.*

*I'm sorry I am not cheerful but you are the only person I can talk to on these horribly personal matters and I hope you will understand that I have finally reached the end of the line ...*

*You loving son, Robin*

A letter from my mother, dated 1<sup>st</sup>. October 1976, gave her perception of his return:

*Dearest Ian,*

*I enclose one of Robin's letters. I replied at once to say that we would pay his air-fare home. This we did (single air-fare from Johannesburg to Edinburgh was £389) and he arrived on Wednesday at Turnhouse. It was a very wet foggy day and I could not start the car. I had to phone the airport and tell them to page Robin and say I could not meet him as arranged and that he must take a taxi home. Robin had exactly 25p on him.*

*He needs expert help and advice – he won't be eligible for the Unemployment Benefit, and getting a job here will be very difficult. In his present state of mental and physical health, I am sure he is best off at home where he is welcome and has food and a roof over his head, and medical care.*

Six weeks after this was written, an entry from my diary reveals a somber appraisal of me coming face to face with *my* self.

Diary entry: 21/11/76 (the day before my 30<sup>th</sup>. birthday)

*My central drive in my twenties has been an attempt to understand myself and the world from a disadvantaged position. For most of the last decade, I have been, in a very real sense, down and out. In terms of my ideals and aspirations, I guess I could say that the stages have gone something like this:*

1. **Understanding self.** *For example, I have come to the conclusion that intra-psychically, I am a socialist in my intellect, an anarchist in my spirit, and a conservative in my emotions.*
2. **Understanding others** (especially women and 'the oppressed') *by being/becoming oppressed myself.*

3. *Attempting to change my behavior* - my actions, my words, my experiences, my relations – to correspond with my notions of right and wrong.
4. *Attempting to change my social environment* – these attempts ranging from anarchist 'alternative institution' ideas, to being a socialist activist.

*Relative to Sedbergh times, I may not be very happy or confident, but there has been some improvement in the past few years. I have to survive the job at Laval if I am going to hold my head up a little when I visit Britain next summer.*

*Male role-models up until now: George Orwell, Gandhi, Yehudi Menuhin, Erich Fromm, A.S. Neill, Henry Miller, Dostoevsky, D.H. Lawrence, Saul Alinsky, Cesar Chavez, Camillo Torres, Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich ... and Bill Cosby.*

The fact was that I had made a firm decision to return to Britain for a visit. That prospect was reflected in the developing plot for my first play, 'The Interview', in which the protagonist (Josh) has been sent to Purgatory. Like the prodigal son, he has to account for his failures and shortcomings to the gatekeepers, Peter and Michael (both father figures – one kindly, the other judgmental). Based on their evaluation, he will get to see The Father, or he will be dispatched in a downward direction.

I was not afraid of facing my father but I was as scared as hell. The reality of my eight year total estrangement from my father was beginning to haunt me. I was depressed and I was lost. I was 'Josh' in *The Interview* - my unfinished play, not quite in Hell, but rather Purgatory; wanting to trust St. Peter that he would see both my good intentions and worthy actions and let me through the pearly gates, but finding that it was not he but Michael who held the keys to power. The Archangel Michael, soul brother of Lucifer, was the judge who would be determining my fate on the basis of actions he saw as willful, insubordinate and destructive of the natural order. And Michael was my father. I was not afraid to face him – but I was scared to death.

I wrote a letter to my mother telling her of my decision and stating that: (1) I didn't need her to pay for the airfare, (2) I did not intend to stay at 96 Spottiswoode Street and would seek alternative accommodation in one of the University of Edinburgh residences, (3) that I was coming to see her, and was not prepared to take any crap from my father.

In December, I received a reply from my mother.

*Extracts from letter from my mother: 20/12/76*

*Your remarks regarding Daddy distress me and worry me. I just cannot understand how or why you have come to feel as you apparently do. How you can continue to bear ill will, I just cannot understand. Daddy is old, blind and scarcely mobile. It is so sad that I cannot express my disappointment. Please Ian, come home and try to put right whatever it is that has gone wrong between you and Daddy.*

*Love Mum.*

I not only had issues about my father, but also about becoming a father. When, if ever, would that happen? And with whom? Jennifer? And what about Ya-el? That conflict was not completely resolved. I continued to have strong feelings towards Ya-el and I continued to wonder whether or not I should leave Montreal in 1977 and join her in Toronto.

As it happened, that particular issue did get resolved. Ya-el visited Montreal for a few days before Christmas and I met with her. We both knew that the romantic and sexual part of our relationship was coming to an end so the meeting was bitter-sweet. I hadn't told Jennifer about the meeting but somehow she found out. She said, "I know you saw that woman from Toronto". Unfortunately, this was

on the very day that I had asked Jennifer to come to the Yellow Door to see me perform 'Jennifer's Song'. Over the phone, Jennifer told me that she felt it was "inappropriate under the circumstances" for her to go to the Yellow Door. Her feelings were wholly understandable but nonetheless I felt crushed. I wasn't living with her. I hadn't cheated on her or deceived her or lied to her. The song was a testament of my allegiance to her and she knew how important it was for me to count on her support. I didn't know how, but in my heart of hearts I hoped we would re-unite and become a true couple and have a child together. Then, to make matters worse, Jennifer informed me that she wanted to have an affair.

Over the Christmas vacation of 1976 – I channeled my thoughts and feelings into a response to my mother's letter:

Letter to my mother;

3522 St. Dominique, Montreal, P.Q.  
10<sup>th</sup>. Jan. 1977

*Dear Mum,*

*I would like you to read this letter very carefully because in it I want to answer clearly the following comment that you made in your last letter; "I just cannot understand how or why you have to feel as you apparently do. How you can continue to bear ill will, I just cannot understand." And later, "please Ian, come home, and try to put right whatever it is that has gone wrong between you and Daddy."*

*First of all Mum, some facts:*

- {1} I was the one who worked bloody hard to get a music scholarship to Sedbergh*
- (2) I was the one who worked myself to a standstill to get both 'O' and 'A' levels (in 2 subjects that I had little or no aptitude towards)*
- (3) I was the one who did extremely well at Sedbergh ... in music, in sport, in the cadet force, and in an administrative capacity as a prefect.*
- (4) I was the one who struggled to the utmost to stave off your continual anxieties and lack of real praise and recognition when I accomplished something.*
- (5) I was the one who tried my damndest to live up to, and surpass Dad's insatiable expectations and hopes.*
- (6) I was the one who at the age of 17, was faced with the intolerable situation of, on the one hand, Dad pressing me to go into the Army, and on the other, you pressing me equally hard not to go into the Army - a situation that I was forced to resolve to the dissatisfaction of one of you.*
- (7) I was the one who got a Drapers' Scholarship to university and did what both my teachers and Dad had said that I was incapable of - namely, get a degree (at one time, your and Dad's dream).*
- (8) I was the one who did something really quite remarkable - namely get accepted into one of the top graduate programs in the world at the age of 23 – before I had even completed a full four year Honour's B. A. program.*
- (9) I was the one who not only did not receive credit for this achievement, but in fact the opposite - discredit. Why? I still do not know. Because Dad held a grudge that I had not gone into the Army? Because Dad turned on his often displayed prejudice against anyone and everyone who does not conform to his own narrow and rigid views?... so that I became 'A Hippy' or 'A Communist', not according to*

*the facts but according to Dad's associations with long hair, or L.S.E.*

*I don't know – maybe he can answer these questions for me. Maybe he can put right whatever has gone wrong between him and I.*

*(10) I was the one who tried to support you, defend you against some appalling mental cruelty on his part.*

*(11) I was the one who tried and tried and tried over a period of 5 years or more to forge closer links with you and Dad ... tried to understand you and he better ... tried to get you and he to understand me better.*

*(12) NOT ONCE DID I ASK EITHER OF YOU FOR ANYTHING – MONEY, HELP, ... NOTHING EXCEPT FOR ONE THING WHICH I DID ASK FOR, AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN ... AND THAT WAS TRUST, RESPECT, BELIEF, FAITH, UNDERSTANDING, MORAL SUPPORT.*

*Mum, you don't seem to appreciate when you ask me to understand and accept Dad (because "he's old, blind scarcely mobile") that an important part of my life has already been spent in a serious attempt to understand and be understood. You don't seem to appreciate that a large part of my youth was spent trying desperately to follow your oft-stated philosophy of 'adapting to Dad', but that there was little if any sign of him adapting to me ... or anyone else. On the contrary, when I came to do the courageous thing, namely work out my own destiny, he rejected me. He rejected me for being me!! He hurt me again and again just as he has hurt you and Robin, and even Joy. For a long time, I forgot and forgave. I blamed myself. I vowed to try harder to please him. I put up with his games, his nonsense, his bullshit. But finally I realized that if I was to cease spending the rest of my life being a coward, I would have to stand up to him. And when I did that, Mum, do you know what he did? He played really dirty. He let loose the ton of bricks that broke the camel's back. He did something for which I have not forgiven him, and for which he owes me a deep apology.*

*On June 1<sup>st</sup>. 1970, he sent me a postcard on which was written the following;*

*"Thank-you for your card and letter. Most thoughtful of you to remember such an insignificant occasion. We drove down to Peebles, had a splendid lunch, then sat in the sun overlooking the Tweed. Also had a very happy family celebration. It is most agreeable, especially for me, now that I am in bonus time to be surrounded by brothers and sisters, their children and grandchildren, all so happy, contented and prosperous. I share their pride and happiness and revel in the laughter and gaiety of youth - a real tonic. **We miss on these occasions, the gallant boy who lies at Casino. I like to think that we never consciously let the side down** (my emphasis). The weather here has turned cool again, but we get the odd spot of sunshine  
ADB,"*

*Now Mum, now do you understand how and why I feel the way I do? If you don't, please let me know. I have kept copies of all my important letters to you and Dad, and vice-versa, so it is easy for me to recount to you incidents and experiences that led me to my present attitude, an attitude that has remained unchanged for 6 or 7 years now.*



*Dad hurt me and Dad rejected me, NOT the other way around. He owes me an apology otherwise he can expect nothing other than ill-will.*

*Even you Mum, even you have given me some choice comments in the past. For instance, around this same time in 1970, you wrote me a letter in which you said, "please Ian, don't sink any lower"! Yes Mum, from your perspective, perhaps my life has seemed strange. I am not going to defend my actions now - I have tried to do this on many, many occasions in the past. All I will say (and I think it is the only thing that really matters) is that I have always tried to do what I thought was right, and I have always tried my hardest.*

*Now with that as background let's get to the present situation. I will either write to Dad or send a tape (perhaps of this letter) in which I will tell him in effect what I am telling you, namely that he must apologize to me in order to expect any 'burying of the hatchet' from my side. Such an action from him would be absolutely necessary before I would consider staying at 96 Spottiswoode Street.*

*I would be happy and amazed if he responded in such a fashion. But I don't expect it.*

*No, I don't have any expectations, but I am prepared to make one last attempt to communicate with him. If he chooses not to respond or refuses to apologize, then you cannot blame me for not staying at 96 Spottiswoode Street. It would make no sense. I refuse to make others miserable, or to be made to feel miserable by others.*

*However, I do want to see you. I do want to have a good time with you. These are some of my current ideas:*

*(1) to stay at Pollack Hall (the duration of my stay in Edinburgh will probably be 10 days -2 weeks)*

*{2) to rent a car*

*(3) to take you out to the country and the seaside; to go for walks, play a little golf, etc.*

*{4) to go to some shows; music, theatre, etc.*

*I would also like, if it is possible, to see your dentist. Dental costs here are absurdly high. Would this be possible? Is he or she a good dentist?*

*As far as the dates, I would probably come sometime during July. Well that's all for now. Please read this letter carefully, Mum, and respond,*

*Love, Ian*

What was I really angry about? I was angry at receiving no recognition, acceptance or support for refusing to be part of an elite, for choosing to go my own way and not compromising on ideals of fairness and equality, as I saw them. I was angry because I kept discovering that things just weren't fair, and most people weren't aware or just didn't care. And I was angry because I had learned that there was more than a grain of truth to the saying 'the road to Hell is paved with good intentions'. I was angry because my parents felt I had not succeeded, and secretly I feared that they might be right, even when judged by my own criteria.

And, as always, the flip side of that anger was depression:

*Diary Entry: 6/1/77*

*Leaving early*

*To get into an unwanted car*

*To drive through ugly, urban layers  
To a suburban wasteland  
That offends the sense and stunts the imagination*

*And there  
To enter a school that is oppressive  
Both as a building and as a system*

*To try to teach in windowless classrooms  
To avoid teachers  
Who have reached the point  
Of caring more for their cars  
Their mortgages and vacations  
Than for their kids*

*And they – the children of immigrants  
Like welfare recipients  
Do not thank the hand that feeds them  
Because they know how much  
The other hand is taking away from them*

*And some, like rabid dogs, even bite  
The outstretched hand  
Reacting  
Against neglect and abuse  
Rebelling  
Against the death order  
That freezes the flow of life*

*And I have to escape  
So between classes  
I get into my unwanted car  
Drive through the wasteland  
To that palace of The Consumer  
HYPERMARCHÉ*

*And there I draw dollars from  
An unnecessary salary  
And consider buying unnecessary items  
Because there is nowhere else to go  
And nothing else to do  
Except eat pretzels and get drunk  
In the Hyperbrasserie*

*To brace myself for a return  
To the windowless classrooms*

In January 1977, I began singing lessons with a teacher who had been recommended to me by Howard, Jennifer's friend. Her name was Jane Ellison. She was an ex-opera singer married to a black trumpet player, which in those days was about as cool as it gets.

Jane was a good teacher and a dynamic person. She was short of stature and feisty, a kind of classically trained Janis Joplin. It turned out that she had also done a lot of 'personal work' and was in the process of co-writing a book with Laura Perls, Fritz Perls's widow. The purpose of this book was to explore the connection between the voice as an instrument and the psyche as its source.

Meanwhile, I continued to experience throat problems. After several visits to an ENT specialist, I had been told that I had 'globus' – a psychosomatic condition. I told Jane about this and on my second meeting with her, she suddenly tapped my chest and said quizzically, "problems with your father?" I was amazed.

The problem I had with my father, as far as singing went, was that I was quite literally 'choked up with emotion'.



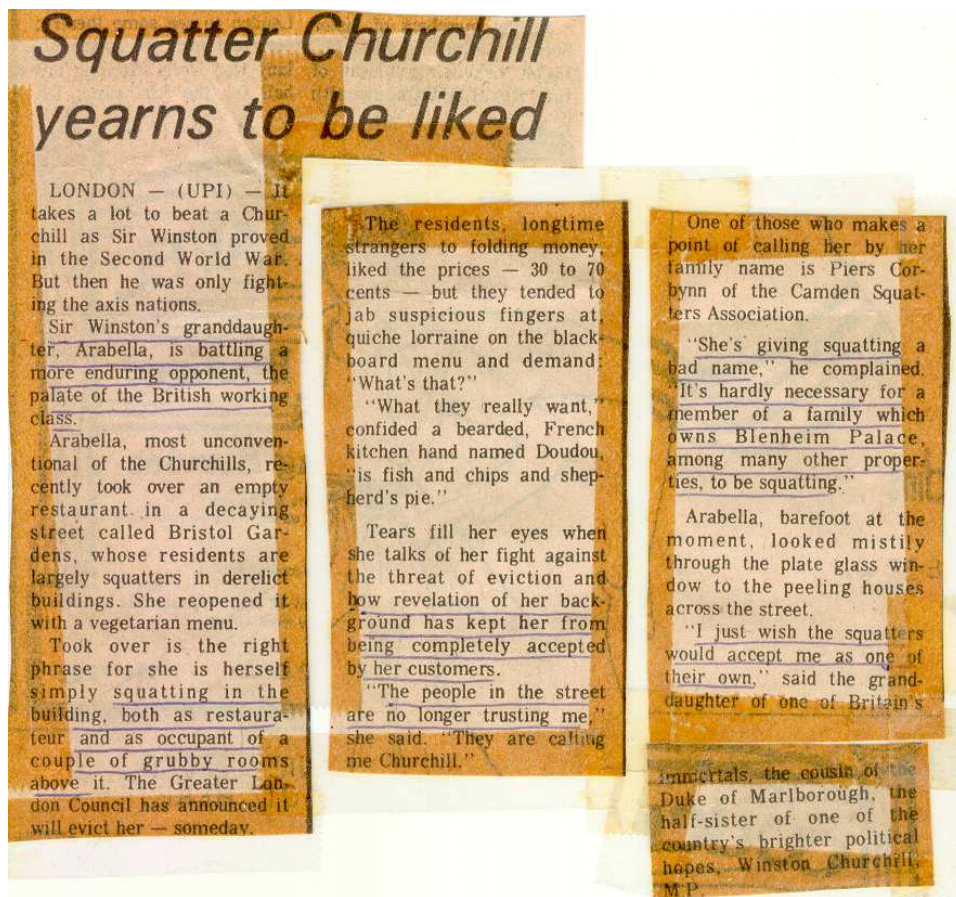
## 18.

In my twenties, I had tried to re-invent myself as a classless, proletarian worker. Like a chameleon, I had tried to blend into a radically different environment and lifestyle. But whether in an east-end London factory, or a north-end Montreal classroom, the attempt was only partially successful.

From time to time, I would come across an article in the newspaper which would resonate with my experiences.

Such as this one:

*The Gazette: 25/2/77*



Whereas I could take cold comfort from the fact that 'Squatter Churchill' had not had much success as a class rebel, in the case of the following article, I became obsessed by comparisons that were too close for comfort.

# Accent's English, politics PQ

By ANN LAUGHLIN  
of The Gazette

*Gazette Jan 10 1977*

A 32-year-old Yorkshireman with degrees in philosophy and theology has taken on the difficult task of interpreting anglophone aspirations to the new Parti Quebecois government as the first anglophone adviser hired by a PQ minister.

What kind of person is David Payne, who now serves as adviser to Camille Laurin, minister responsible for cultural development, and what prompted him to take such a job?

"The English-speaking Quebecer is now asking himself the same questions the French-speaking Quebecer has been asking for years — what Quebec is," the soft-spoken humanities teacher says.

"I feel very much a part of that questioning and I share the anxieties of the anglophones," he adds. "This is the most interesting moment in Quebec history, a prise de conscience, a coming of age, and there is no purpose to just stand aside.

"I can contribute to the articulation of some of the questions."

Outside his tiny office in the stock exchange tower, the sudden babble of voices and general bustle signalled the late-night end of yet another marathon session of meetings between the minister and ethnic groups to find out what is on people's minds.

Payne suddenly remembered he still hadn't had any supper but gamely kept on talking, his voice reflecting the fatigue of weeks of long days.

The super-ministry is still getting set up and arranging an interview with Payne is no simple matter.

Protocol dictates such requests go through the press attache, said Payne when first approached.

A call to the attache had, however, produced Payne himself, who was manning the telephones (with the secretaries off) that day.

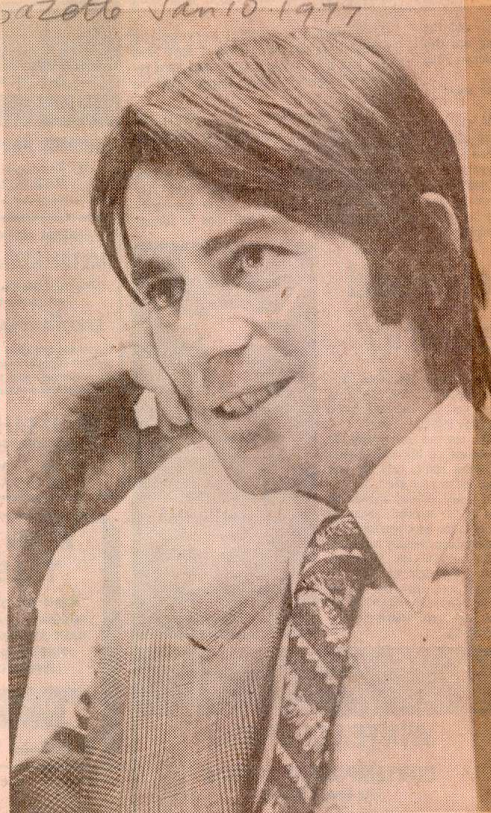
While comprehending the concerns of anglophones, Payne has confidence in the PQ government and has been an active party member almost since his arrival here from his native England six years ago.

The second of 10 children born to a teaching family in Yorkshire's busy Teesport, he studied for seven years at Rome's Gregorian University, receiving degrees in philosophy and theology, as well as a diploma in sociology from Louvain.

He spent his summers travelling throughout Europe and the Middle East, working for a while on an archaeological dig on the island of Crete "really just pushing barrows around" and reconstructing a shantytown.

He set out for Canada in 1971, spending the first months travelling around the country by bus and hitchhiking.

Attracted by the life and history of the Quebec people, he settled in Montreal. After finding a job teaching religious studies at a South Shore high



Gazette, Len Sidwa

Human problems concern humanities specialist David Payne.

school he immersed himself in the new culture and language.

"I was making an embarrassingly large salary by English standards, so I rented a huge house which I planned to allow immigrants and poor people to use as a drop-in centre, having just come through the experience of being an immigrant myself," he said.

Faced with an influx of Asians expelled from Uganda, federal immigration authorities asked Payne to help them out and with a government grant the centre functioned for a year before

being torn down to make room for McGill University construction.

"The Ugandans saw the need to learn French, but it seemed almost every means of integration (into Quebec society) was closed to them," said Payne with some disappointment. "Someone coming to Quebec does not necessarily perceive the experience as a place, the smell of the land and something perhaps one can't teach."

Payne then became a teacher of humanities at Vanier College and eventually

president of that CEGEP's teachers' union.

He recalls as one of the most "harrowing" experiences of his life the months of strife-torn teacher contract negotiations last year.

"It hurt me bitterly to experience the intransigence of a government that was arrogant and had become frighteningly removed from the people," he said.

The experience strengthened some of the convictions he already held.

"It was not romantic idealism that drew me to the Parti Quebecois," he said with a smile. "It was not a difficult choice to make.

"Coming from outside the country, perhaps one is privileged to be able to look objectively at the situation which compensates for the lack of having experienced a country."

Payne said that, being a bachelor without a family to fall back on, he had an enormous appetite to become involved in Quebec, reading, seeing films, talking to people.

"Coming to Canada, one is invited to take part in bilingualism, in biculturalism and this struck me as peculiarly schizophrenic and an ideal of perfection that could hardly be attained."

His study of Quebec history impressed on Payne the institutionalized inequality of opportunity in Quebec, with the predominance of anglophones.

The idea of nationalism is not strange to a European, he noted.

"It is normal and necessary that a people in their own land make their own decisions on their own destiny," he said.

"Railing about separatism is so passe. Anybody who reads the PQ program must understand that the party is not talking about separation from the rest of the world but of establishing its own priorities in the North American context."

Payne did some campaigning for PQ candidates during the 1973 and 1976 elections, translated the PQ platform into English and wrote the party campaign brochure, "Enough is enough."

When not teaching or doing party work, Payne enjoys soccer, tennis, squash and cross-country skiing. He has moved a French-Canadian style house piece by piece north of Montreal where he rebuilt it.

Now that he is working for the PQ administration, a government he expects to have a much more human face than the former Liberals, he has had to postpone plans to study for a doctorate in humanities with a specialty in anthropology.

Oh dear! Same age more or less. Same roots (U.K., Yorkshire, Sociology). Immigrated to Canada about the same time. Same values ... "I was making an embarrassingly large salary by English standards, so I rented a huge house which I planned to allow immigrants and poor people to use as a drop-in centre, having just come through the experience of being an immigrant myself". Same career choice, i.e. teacher. Same sense of priorities, i.e. "institutionalized inequality of opportunity" versus the red herring of 'biculturalism'.

The comparison led to the recording of an extended imaginary dialogue between David Payne and myself in my diary:

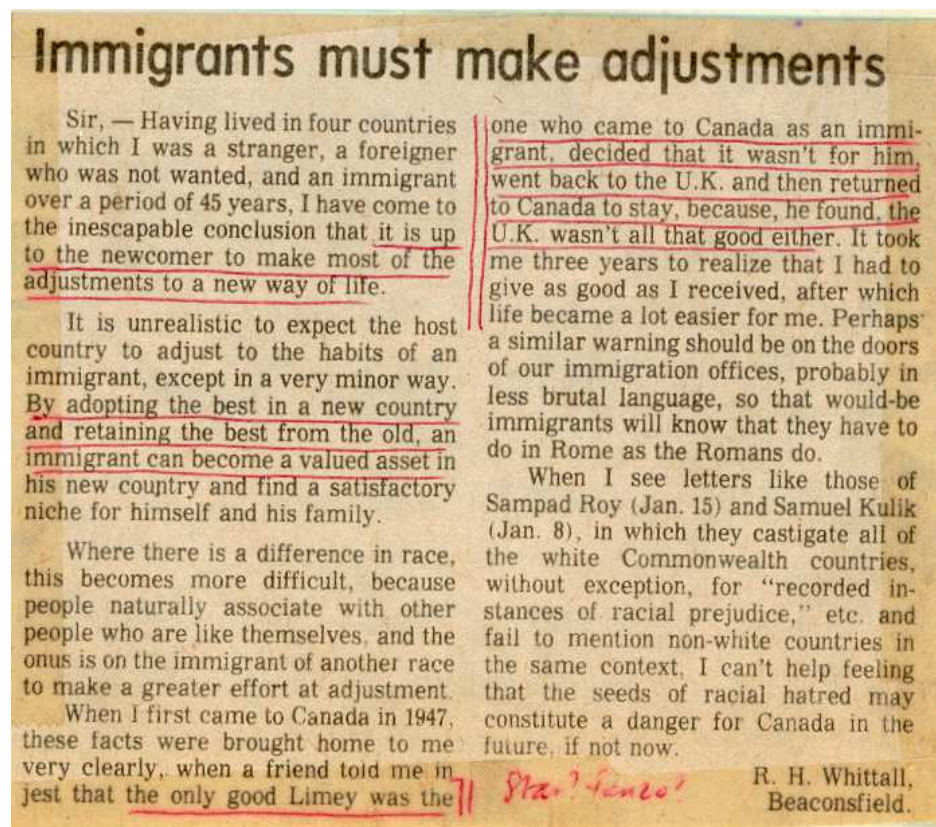
Diary Entry: January 1977

- PAYNE: *Why did you not become a member of the Part Quebecois?*  
BROWN: *It seemed terribly remote from my particular problems, which were how to survive from day to day. I was experiencing what it was like to be very poor, very alienated – partly as a product of choice, partly unavoidable necessity. I was going through the terrible experience of being the immigrant who has nothing, who is starting again from scratch.*
- PAYNE: *Yes, but if I did, why couldn't you have?*  
BROWN: *Maybe I could have, maybe I should have. I certainly had the conviction that it was necessary to learn French. I certainly wanted to make French friends very badly although I didn't know how or where ..*
- PAYNE: *(interrupting) You could have if you'd joined the P.Q.*  
BROWN: *Yes I know, but you see there were three big differences between you and I.*  
PAYNE: *Yes ...?*  
BROWN: *First of all, you had no blockage about working in an anglophone environment. And you had better qualifications than me. Second, you had no blockage against working at a middle-class kind of job ... you were working 'within the system'. Thirdly, you were going straight from the identity of 'Yorkshireman' or 'Englishman' to that of 'Quebecer'.*
- PAYNE: *I don't get it. Isn't that what you did?*  
BROWN: *Not exactly. I had been to Canada before, gone back to Britain and rejected it, then immigrated with a fractured non-identity. Culturally speaking I didn't know who or what I was. I refused to see myself as English or British, I could not see myself as 'Canadian', and although I wanted to, I couldn't see myself as a 'Quebecer'.*
- PAYNE: *Sounds like a convoluted rationalization.*  
BROWN: *No, you don't understand. We have things in common, that's true ... but there are some differences, and that's what I'm trying to point out. I mean, you had a job right away at Vannier as a College Teacher – that gave you instant respect and credibility. I had no job security ... for much of the time, I didn't even have a job I wanted to find or create alternative institutions. I wanted to see myself as part of a radical and perhaps even revolutionary movement. But it had to be at the grass roots level - I don't trust political parties of any stripe.*
- PAYNE: *That's just too idealistic.*  
BROWN: *Probably. What is so ironical is that you succeeded in achieving the goals I was aiming at, but you took an altogether different route. Perhaps if I had completed the Masters at L.S.E., my path might have been more akin to yours. I mean, the drop-in centre for immigrants and low-income people is exactly what I have wanted to set up with my girlfriend Jennifer. Like you, I want to be a teacher, but now I'm approaching it from a different angle. As a College Teacher and as a bachelor, you have had the social and economic security to support your dreams – including building your own house in the country. I am envious David Payne, I feel inadequate ... but I congratulate you.*

One of the many things that the middle-class didn't understand about poverty and unemployment was the experience of being 'cut off' – whether by an employee or a landlord. However small or insignificant, your job and rented accommodation together were like a little garden that you tended and took care off. To have those destroyed or taken away was painful. To have to repeatedly start over wore down even the strongest resolve and eventually sowed the seeds of despair. Like my sister, David Payne had had the uprooting of being an immigrant, but had not been uprooted - or chosen to uproot himself from his class.

Now that I was a teacher, I didn't know what class I was. Part of me felt that I had re-entered the middle-class, although I still did not have anything to show for it. The other part of me knew that both psychologically and materially, I would probably never be part of 'the middle-class' again.

One thing was for sure. David Payne was not an 'ex-pat', the kind of Englishman who, while taking what Canada had to offer, was always complaining that things were better in 'the old country'. A letter to the Gazette in January articulated that point emphatically:



*"The only good Limey was the one who came to Canada as an immigrant, decided that it wasn't for him, went back to the U.K. and then returned to Canada to stay, because, he found, the U.K. wasn't all that good either"* – how true.

I felt so alone in my perceptions that when I encountered people like Mr. Payne or R.H. Whittall, or even Ms. Churchill, the effect was one of validation. In comparing myself to David Payne, I might end up feeling like I'd failed, but at least I didn't feel like I was crazy.

R.D. Laing, Jonathon Kozol and Paulo Freire did the same thing for me. I had recently bought Knots by Laing, and that book captured the way in which couples can drive each other crazy.

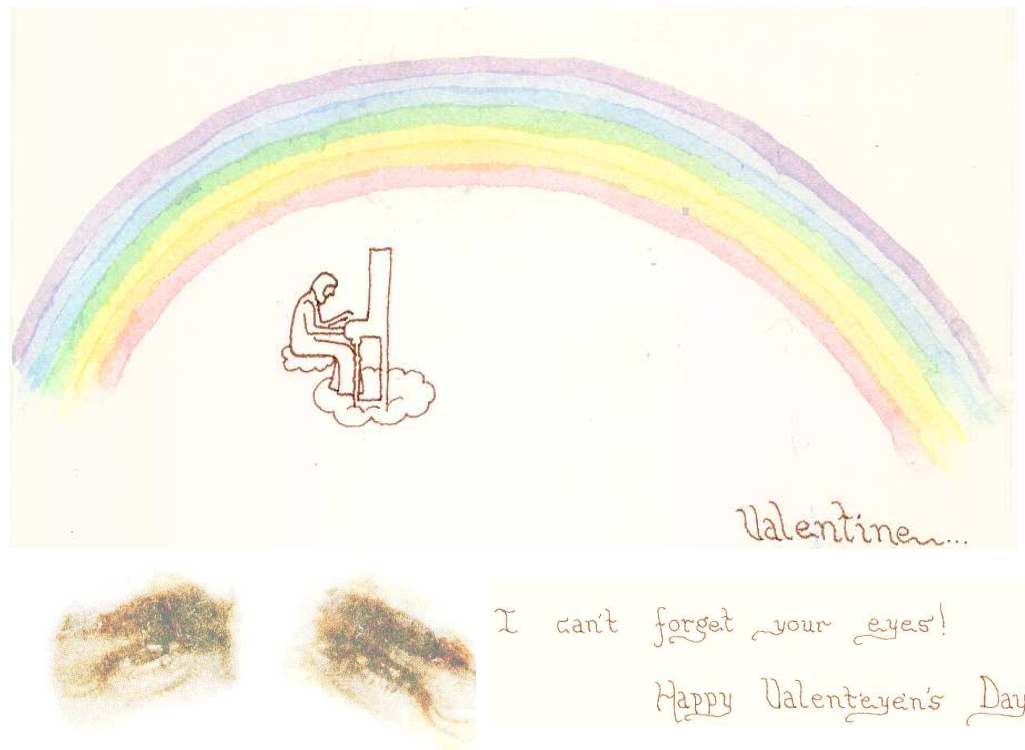
The biggest knot that bound me to Jennifer was the feeling that she had demanded much of me – she had depended on my support, and that I needed proof that she could or would reciprocate when



need arise. I had become weak and demanding in my increasing sense of being a victim. Maybe this was part of the process of becoming a Canadian – discovering a victim identity. Certainly Margaret Atwood's Survival (another book that had validated my perceptions) was based on the theme of Canadian-as-victim. There it was, chapter after chapter: The immigrant-as-victim; aboriginals-as-victims; French-Canadians as victims; women-as-victims. As usual, only white WASP males were missing from the list (which of course raised the possibility of members of this stereotypically privileged group being, at the very least, victims of misunderstanding and myopic profiling).

Knots, binds, wounds characterized my relationship with Jennifer. Mixed emotions of love, hate, shattered faith, renewed hope, sorrow, pity, compassion, envy, resentment resulted in confusion as to intention and action. And in this confusion, I searched for exit strategies.

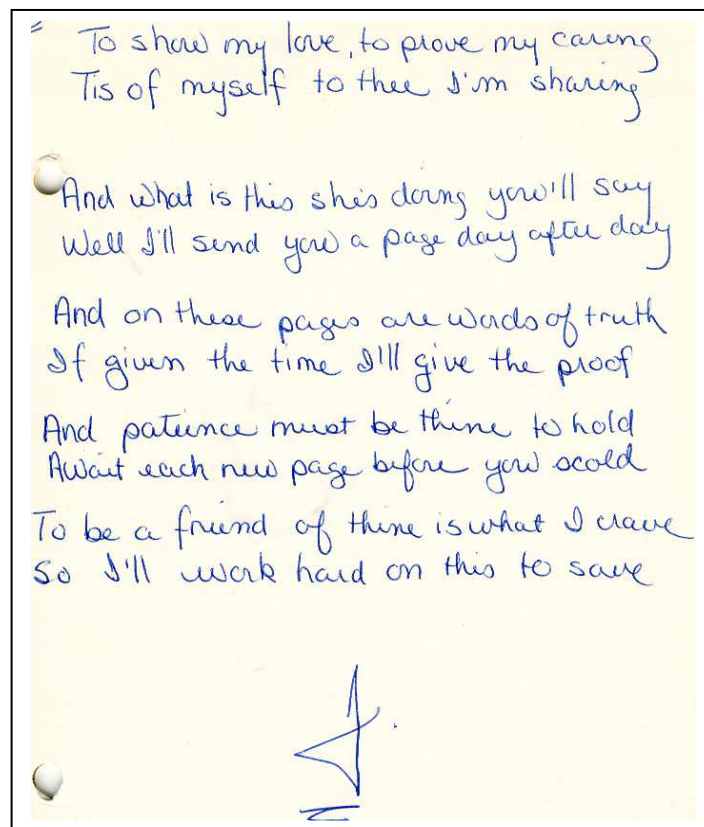
In February, I received a Valentine's Day card from Ya-el:



And I couldn't forget *her* eyes and the extraordinary experience of what passed between our eyes that first evening at the Rainbow Bar and Grill. I tortured myself with thoughts that I had made a terrible mistake by not breaking up Jennifer and pledging allegiance to Ya-el. I knew I had to get together with her one more time in order to resolve things once and for all. I wrote to her in Toronto and suggested a meeting in Kingston, approximately half way between us – perhaps in the spring.

\* \* \*

Jennifer and I continued to have our 'therapy sessions' in the hope of untangling some of the knots. It was clear that something was shifting - on Jennifer's side, at any rate. She started sending me cards and letters at a furious rate.



It was clear that Jennifer wanted to enter a new era of openness and honesty with me. As she said, she wanted to "prove her love to me"; she wanted to respond to my sense of weakness, vulnerability and distrust, to give me a sense of security.

"Await a new page before you scold." That was it - she was getting back from me some of the 'show-me-that-I-can-trust-you' behavior, that included testing limits, nagging and petulant complaining.

In one letter, (24/2/77), Jennifer's Aquarian Humanism was clearly stated:

*Since a very early age, I have experienced anger – anger at what I saw. Why? Why was there war? Why did people do such God awful things to each other? I always felt strongly that I didn't want to do these things but I want to do something to help change occur. Why haven't I? That's a good question. I spout off at the mouth a lot, but it always seems words and no action."*

Hmm ... 'words and no action' ... Ya-el had said the same thing about me. Maybe Jennifer and I shared an over-conscientiousness that left us feeling that we were *never* doing enough.

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Jennifer sent me a note that opened my heart to her. She admitted she had hurt me and she apologized. There was no doubt that for better or worse I was into needing others' confessions. I was sick of feeling guilty, and/or being made to feel guilty.

Letter from Jennifer: 3/3/77

Jan, my dear sweet Jan,

Not wanting to intrude on your space or  
"interfere" in your life & yet longing to take a <sup>FIRST</sup> ~~first~~  
step however small - I reach out knowing  
that my words are meaningless & yet having  
no other tools to use at present I use them.  
Jan I have hurt you badly - I have  
not supported you when you needed it  
the most, did not trust you when you  
gave me every reason to trust - have not  
strongly enough shown faith in you and  
I am sorry - I apologize from  
the bottom of my heart

I want to be your friend - in a <sup>HEALTHY</sup> ~~best~~  
way  
I want to beg you not to cut me from  
your life

You are hard on yourself & also hard <sup>ON</sup>  
others - please realize when I was at <sup>WHEN</sup> ~~with~~  
I met you  
now because of you & Dawson & the people  
I met there I am able to offer friendship  
instead of nothing

With the warmest feelings  
& deepest caring  
love J.



## 19.

It took a while, but eventually I got a response from my mother to the long letter I had sent her explaining my position with respect to my father.

*Letter from my mother: March 1977*

*Dearest Ian,*

*I find your letter difficult to answer. I seem to have come to some kind of emotional block. I have not read your letter to Daddy – simply because I feel it would not be a constructive thing to do – and very hurtful because I know he loves you dearly underneath his dour and rough exterior. I am confident that if you could only get together again, even for a short time, you would come to a better understanding. Your letter seemed so unlike the you I remember, and you must have known how upset it would make me.*

*My priority is the care of Daddy so you must decide for yourself whether you think it is worthwhile to come under these circumstances. You may be sure that deep down, Daddy and I trust, respect, believe and have faith in you. Understanding and moral support must, however, be mutual.*

*Remember also, I once cautioned you ‘paddle your own canoe’ – by that I did not mean cut yourself from your family and love.*

This letter was followed a few weeks later by news of another ‘double’ experience:

*Dearest Ian,*

*I need your help and advice. The other day, I thought I saw you, or your double. This upsets me – because this very fact brings so much I don’t understand and is so hurtful as to overwhelm me.*

*I am trying to get Joy to come over as well. It’s not an exaggeration to say that I have a great yearning to have you at home if only for the short time you promise.*

As usual, I was aware of the knots in my stomach as I read these letters and contemplated the upcoming trip.

\* \* \*

Things were going fine at Laval – at least ‘in theory’. If I was talking to Professor John Harrison at Sir George Williams, or Norman Henchey at McGill, I made it sound real good. For example here is an extract from a letter to Dr. Harrison:

*I am combining the ‘Teaching Social Studies through Drama’ approach that I used at MIND with Freirian techniques of uncovering ‘generative themes and ‘power*

*vocabulary'. I have got my students used to the idea of using tape-recorders to interview both each other and selected outsiders such as the school nurse, the A/V technician, the Principal, and even a few people at Carrefour Laval.*

The truth was that while the results of these endeavors had been interesting, I could hardly make the case that they had led to significant skill-development. Given time, they might have served as the foundation for really useful learning, but it was that time of year where everyone could sense the end in sight. In addition, it had already been hinted that I might not be rehired for the following year, despite the fact that Mr. Lemieux had evaluated me and I had passed my first year's probation. It would continue to be hard, but I knew that I would survive the rest of the year. However, when all was said and done, I could hardly claim that I felt like a 'success'.

*Diary entry: 20/3/77*

*This job has served to cut me off from my community. I feel weak and disorientated most of the time. My heart isn't in what I am doing any more. The inauthenticity of trudging through class day after day, week after week, feeling that neither I nor my students (with the possible exception of George) are really benefiting, saps my strength and makes me lose self-respect and dignity.*

*However, the students like me. I have gained their trust and respect and I know that this is an accomplishment in itself. I have learned that there are certain basic divisions in my class. Try as I might, I cannot integrate the girls with the boys. The girls stick together, and the boys stick together.*



*See what I mean!*

*With both the girls and the boys group, there is an even split between the Italian-Canadian bunch and the French-Canadians. In the case of the boys, the latter are the real challenge. Kids like Raymond and Normand are understandably defensive and I continue to question why on earth their parents want them at an anglophone school.*

I copied out some of the taped conversations and here are some highlights. First the girls:

*Daniella: What did you do this weekend?*

*Lucia: I went to an engagement. It was so fun. You should have seen it. This guy asked me out. I was so embarrassed ... oh my*

*Maria: You're so crazy.*  
*Daniella: Was he cute ... the guy?*  
*Lucia: Oh yes ... he was adorable ... my God, was he ever adorable.*  
*Daniella: Don't tell me any lies*  
*Lucia: I'm not telling any lies. You should see him. I have a picture of him. Do you want to see him?*  
*Daniella: I hate the way you talk.*  
*Lucia: Oh Daniella, you're just jealous.*  
*Daniella: Shut up.*  
*Elena: I wanted to ask you guys something. It's not important but ... almost everybody in the world has a boyfriend ... and I want to ask you ... I know it's none of my business ... but I'm really curious ... now Maria, do you really have a boyfriend?*  
*Maria: No, not yet.*  
*Elena: And Daniella, how about you?*  
*Daniella: No*  
*Elena: And Lucia, do you really have a boyfriend?*  
*Lucia: Me? Well ... not ... well, I guess so.*  
*Elena: Who is it?*  
*Lucia: He's not at the school though. He is adorable, you know. His name is ... his name is not Danny ... his name is ...*  
*Elena: Yes ...*  
*Lucia: His name is ... Harry Blue.*  
*Elena: Harry Blue? What a name!*  
*Lucia: I know, I'm only kidding ... I'm only joking ... O.K. let's be serious ... O.K. open your ears now ... his name is ... Donny Osmond.*  
*Maria: Oh God, you're sick ... he's all ugly.*  
*Lucia: He's not that ugly.*  
*Maria: No, he's cute but ... he's too old for you.*  
*Lucia: I know, but he's my type.*  
*Maria: Well, thank-you very much.*  
*Lucia: You're welcome.*  
*(pause)*  
*Elena: Maria, who's your favorite teacher?*  
*Maria: Mr. Brown ... well you could say Mr. Brown ... I guess so ... I love Mr. Brown ... he's so nice ... I think he's my best teacher I ever had.*  
*Elena: I think you love him.*  
*Maria: I do not.*  
*Elena: Maria, you're in love.*  
*Maria: I am not. The teacher is older than me.*  
*Elena: Yeah ... he could be my father.*  
*Maria: No, he can't be my father, but I like him a lot.*  
*Elena: Woo ... I'm going to tell him ... one of these days I'm going to tell him ... I'm going to tell him what you said ... that you love Mr. Brown ... I'm going to tell him that*  
*(sudden silence as Mr. Brown enters the room)*

And now a sample of how the boys talked. This is Joey Collucino, a very talkative Italian kid, trying to prize open a very taciturn Raymond.

Joey: Raymond ...  
Raymond: What?  
Joey: What do you do after school?  
Raymond: Nothing much.  
Joey: Do you go to your girlfriend's house?  
Raymond: Why not?  
Joey: Do you have a girlfriend?  
Raymond: Yeah  
Joey: Do you like her?  
Raymond: Yeah  
Joey: That's nice. Do you like any sports?  
Raymond: Yeah. Hockey and soccer.  
Joey: You like hockey?  
Raymond: Yeah  
Joey: Did you ever play in a game?  
Raymond: No  
Joey: Would you like to?  
Raymond: No.  
Joey: No?  
Raymond: Just for fun.  
Joey: Do you like your classes?  
Raymond: Ah ... (voice trails off ... long pause)  
Joey: How old is your girlfriend?  
Raymond: 13  
Joey: How old are you?  
Raymond: 14  
Joey: What time do you have lunch at school?  
Raymond: I don't know. When the bell rings.  
Joey: What about home? What do you do after you eat?  
Raymond: In the morning or the afternoon?  
Joey: In the afternoon.  
Raymond: Go to my girlfriend's place.  
Joey: When are you going to get a haircut?  
Raymond: I dunno ... maybe next year.  
Joey: What do you eat for breakfast Saturday morning?  
Raymond: Nothing.  
Joey: Nothing?  
Raymond: No.  
Joey: You don't eat any breakfast?  
Raymond: No.  
Joey: Never?  
Raymond: No.  
Joey: Why not?  
Raymond: Because I don't want to.



Joey: *What about lunch?*  
 Raymond: *Yeah, I eat a lunch.*  
 Joey: *(laughing) I hope so. What do you buy at school?*  
 Raymond: *A hot dog ... french fries sometimes.*  
 Joey: *Do you like the food here?*  
 Raymond: *Yeah. You?*  
 Joey: *Yeah. The french fries are best. Do you know what color of eyes you have?*  
 Raymond: *What!? ... blue, I think.*  
 Joey: *O.K. ... thank-you.*

And this is Luc and Joey interviewing the Principal, Mr. Lemieux. Note that the more Luc questions Mr. Lemieux as to whether he *really* enjoys his job, the more one begins to wonder why Luc keeps asking the same question. They weren't put up to it by me.

Luc: *How old were you when you started here?*  
 Mr. L. *I was 35*  
 Luc: *Do you like being Principal?*  
 Mr. L. *I enjoy it, yes ... I enjoy working with the students.*  
 Joey: *How was school in your day?*  
 Mr. L. *I guess it was stricter ... but we got away with a lot.*  
 Joey: *What was your best subject?*  
 Mr. L. *I guess it was French.*  
 Luc: *Do you like the students in this school?*  
 Mr. L. *(trace of testiness) Oh yes ... if I didn't, I shouldn't be here.*  
 Joey: *Are you married?*  
 Mr. L. *Oh yes ... 3 children ... a 17 year old boy, a 15 year old boy ... and a little princess, I I.*  
 Luc: *Did you have trouble with kids here ... suspending them?*  
 Mr. L. *Yes, it happens ... not often ... but sometimes ... I think it's normal.*  
 Luc: *What do you like about this school?*  
 Mr. L. *What do I like most about this school? Well ... that's a difficult question ... I guess contact with the students ... I used to have a job in an office.*  
 Luc: *Were you happy when the P.Q. got in?*  
 Mr. L. *I was happy for him ... but you know my political convictions are my own ... it's not the kind of thing you want to discuss on a tape ... I can't tell you my political allegiance.*  
*(long pause)*  
 Joey: *Are you very busy?*  
 Mr. L. *Oh yes ... no time to be bored ... an example of that is this interview.*  
 Luc: *Yes, we interview a lot of people*  
*(pause)*  
*Did you truly want to be a teacher?*  
 Mr. L. *Oh yes.*  
*(pause)*  
*O.K. That's it boys.*

And then ... and then, there was George. The extraordinary George – my favorite student and a delightful kid. George, who was only interested in space exploration, the Apollo program, and Saturn rockets, and about which he appeared to know everything – especially statistics. George, who everyone thought was stupid, and who I thought was brilliant.

George loved one other thing besides space exploration, and that was to do dramatic sketches with me – ones in which he usually played the part of Howard Cosell.

The following transcript is from a tape in which we were fairly bouncing off each other's energy (again; no great claims regarding the underlying pedagogical value)



*Howard: And now we go to heaven. What do you have to say my God, my dear Father?*

*(sound of thunder)*

*God almighty.*

*God: Howard!*

*Howard: Yes God.*

*God: Howard, when you address me, you call me Lord God Almighty. Do you understand me. Howard?*

*Howard: Yes, Father Almighty.*

*God: Oh never mind ...*

*(sound of phone ringing)*

*Yes, hello this is God ... if this is a collect call, I will not take it. Who's there?*

*Queen: Hello God. I have a little problem God. It's Evel Knievel. You see, Evel is about to do this jump over the Snake River Canyon and ...*

*God: (interrupting) Who are you, Madam?*

*Queen: Who am I? What do you mean? This is the Queen. The Queen. The Almighty Queen.*

*God: I beg your pardon. I am **The** Almighty.*

*Queen: No, no, no ... you don't understand God. I am Her Majesty The Queen. The Queen of England, the Queen of the Commonwealth, the ...*

*God: (interrupting) Madam, I am not amused. I have no desire to speak to anyone who thinks they are as powerful or mighty as me. Goodbye.*

*(click) (phone rings again)*

*Oh no. Howard.*

*Howard: Yes.*

*God: Howard, please go and see Mrs. Bell and get her to disconnect the line to Heaven – immediately.*

*Howard: (on the phone) Look ... don't talk ... you just made God furious ...*

*Boy, God is really furious. Now we have another star celebrity to help us calm down here. We have ... er ... Lord Killanin ...*

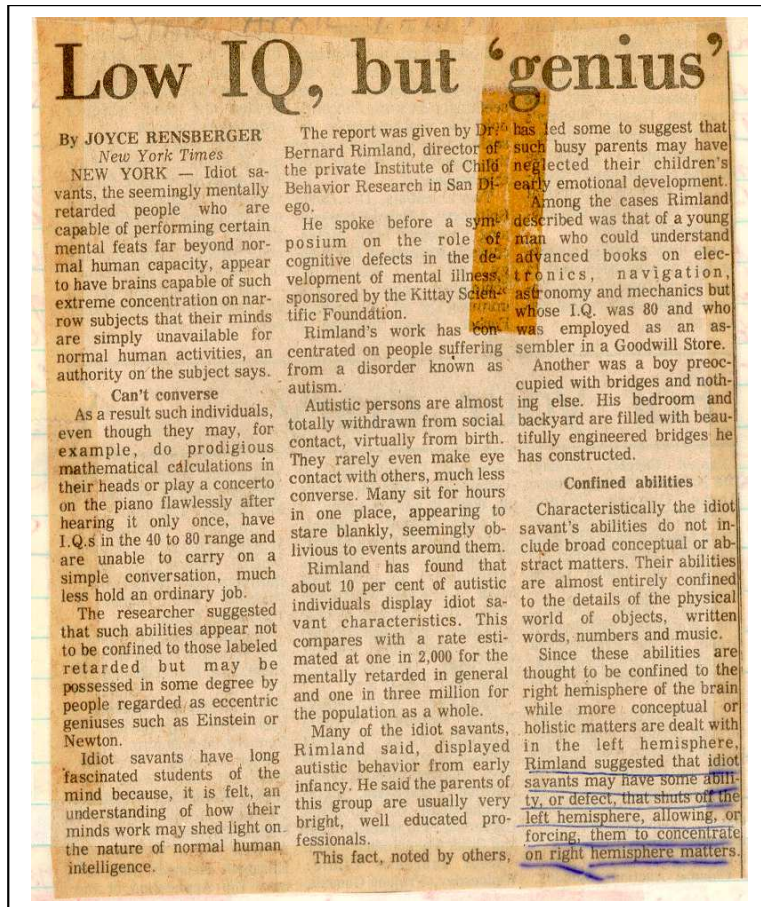
*(sound of thunder)*

*God: Lord? LORD! Howard, I've already warned you about this. There is only one Lord.*

*Howard: Yes, Lord God Almighty. Sorry. We would now like to welcome to the show ... er ... the chairman of the Montreal Olympics Committee.*

*Killanin (strong Irish accent) Hello Howard.  
Howard: Sir, how do you like the launch so far?  
Killanin: Oh I had a lovely lunch – 3 sandwiches and a cup of soup.  
Howard: No, no, no ... I mean the LAUNCH  
Killanin: Oh the launch.  
Howard: Yes, the launch, the launch of the Saturn 5 rocket ... etc.*

And then, one day, as so often happened, there was an article that popped up right on cue.



George was the kind of kid who inspired me to want to be a teacher. I saw in him a reflection of my own struggles to be recognized as intelligent, despite my right brain orientation. I saw the way in which an uncomprehending and inflexible system stereotyped him as 'stupid'. I saw his spirit of resistance and determination to be himself.

I had discussed George in my letters to Ya-el. I knew she would understand. She was well into her program at O.I.S.E. and we had continued to discuss the possibility of my joining her in the Masters program. She has recommended that I contact a Richard Courtenay, the resident guru on using drama for pedagogical purposes. I had followed up by sending him my materials on 'Teaching Social Studies Through Drama', and following a positive response, I had

met him during a quick visit to Toronto. He was very supportive and encouraged me to do a Masters at O.I.S.E.

In the ongoing Masters saga, I decided to drop the Masters program at Sir George Williams and instead apply to two Masters Programs, the Special Education M.Ed. at McGill, and the M.Ed. at O.I.S.E. Eventually, I was accepted into both programs and finished up by doing neither.

Ya-el's Valentine's Day card had haunted me with its evocation of our extraordinary eye-contact connection. I decided I had to see her, even if it was just to say goodbye. We arranged to meet in Kingston – approximately half-way between Montreal and Toronto.

It was a deeply sorrowful meeting. The sweetness was there, the laughter still easily tapped – but there was a mutual recognition that the romance and the magic were part of a chapter that was being closed.

We stood in the bleak cold of Kingston numb with heartache:



A few weeks later, I received a letter from her:

Letter from Ya-el: 4/5/77

Dear Ian,

*O Weaver of Words – you do occasionally come up with such wisdom, and so beautifully. Thank you for writing. I'm such a coward in so many ways. I saw the situation too, as clearly, and wanted to say or write the same sorts of things, but though it was in my heart, I just couldn't get it out, so, bravely, I avoided the whole issue. I know full well that this attitude was unfair to you, and I should have been more up front, but although you managed (oh great winner of the purple cross) to bring me out some, there are still so many fears well-guarded in the castle.*

*I knew Ian, before we met in Kingston, that that meeting would be the end of a certain phase of our relationship (as lovers) and I watched its passing with fear and sorrow. My feelings for you dear are very deep (though confused) and you have become a very significant part of my life. On that score, I hope things will not change – you are my friend and I am very definitely yours. You are still a very dear person for me – wonderful and magical.*

*Right now I'm generally in a mess – in the midst of hard work – rebuilding my self-esteem. Next week, I am going to begin counselling sessions. I cannot stand this state of fear and immobility which I'm in. I seem to be sleep-walking through everything I do – waiting – waiting for things to change, but even though I know I must initiate the change – I cannot move. It is such a lonely, frightening feeling Ian. This is all probably nothing that a few sound smacks in the face won't cure but nonetheless, Ian, you are needed as friend and ally.*

## 20.

There were two other 'lan's' who continued to test my conscience – not my mother's 'doubles' but my cousin Ian Cumming who had gone to Sandhurst and then been killed at Monte Casino in Italy, and Iain Anderson. My father had used the former in casting shame on my choices, and I used the latter as a yardstick of my political consciousness and commitment.

If I had forgiven Iain Anderson for betraying my trust ten years previously (and I hadn't), I hadn't forgotten. I still had unresolved feelings of anger towards him due to his affair with Lesley. What complicated my attitude towards him was the fact that he had gained points of respect in my estimation due to his political activism. Whereas I shied away from taking my socialist beliefs into allegiance with any party, Iain had risen within the ranks of the Workers Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) and his name appeared with regularity in their publication 'The Forge'.

The experience with the Maoist monitors at Centre St. Louis Daycare had alerted me to the authoritarian – even fascist undercurrent to radical socialist parties. An article by Paul Johnson, former editor of 'The New Statesman', in 'The Star' addressed some of my concerns. The article was entitled 'The Enormity of Brute Power Socialism'; some extracts:

*We are slipping towards a Leviathan state in which organized force, violence or compulsion is the prime determinant of politics – a society in which the ordinary person is nothing and the corporation everything.*

*Left and Right are now increasingly meaningless terms; the true dividing line runs between those who put their trust in the individual, and those who insist on the moral righteousness of the collective.*

*There can be no doubt that the extremist groups who have successfully penetrated Labour constituency parties are committed to the destruction of the parliamentary system in Britain.*

*A recent issue of 'Socialist Worker' insisted that the present system cannot be patched up or reformed ... it has to be overthrown. What must replace Parliament is a "workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.*

*Communist and fascist revolutionaries have much in common. Sorel, the French communist, argued that the necessary use of force tested the virility of a people. When Italian fascism took over Sorel's ideology, it placed emphasis on his condemnation of parliamentary democracy as essentially a middle-class phenomenon that corrupted and distorted the correct moral instincts of 'il popolo'.*

*The Marxist element (in the U.K.) has grown with astonishing speed especially with the huge expansion of working class university education in the 1960's and the consequent explosion of the sociology industry.*

*Where do the moderate reasonable politicians like James Callaghan find themselves? Between class-war extremists on the one hand, and union corporatists on the other, they will discover that they are a very thin slice of meat in a very thick totalitarian sandwich.*

My comments on the preceding in a diary entry of March, 1977:

*'The Marxist element has grown with astonishing speed' because it provides more relevant truths and solutions than 'Christian non-conformist individualism'.*

*The richness of the British non-conformist tradition, the cultivation of 'character', has not helped change the inequalities and inequities of the class structure. The church has been part of the Establishment. Its solutions for the oppressed have only been of the order of self-repression or hope for the hereafter.*

*Admittedly, there has been some change, i.e. social welfare state, greater social mobility, less rigid class prejudice, greater union power. However the changes have been too slow and too ineffectual as regards changing the basic social order. So it is hardly surprising that with the release from the blinding (and binding) clutches of nationalism and patriotism following WW2, that people from the oppressed end of the socio-economic scale should increasingly look towards the Marxist road to change, with its emphasis on collective movement rather than individual 'success'.*

*It seems to me that the Paul Johnsons, the James Callaghans (and the Ian Browns) are one of a kind. They are a schizophrenic species that cannot be readily understood by those they hope to represent. Through class position at birth, they are distrusted and at best, not regarded as 'one of us', even though their hearts and minds may be in the right place.*

*Having said that I, like Iain Anderson, would find the path of parliamentary democracy harder to defend than Mr. Johnson. I think he is right to draw a parallel between the totalitarian left and the totalitarian right, but in one sense only – that both are authoritarian by nature. However, Castro's authoritarianism has given rise to medical and educational benefits that serve the whole population in a way that is hardly true of someone like Idi Amin.*

*As polarization increases and confrontation looms, a process that has characterized Britain for well over a decade, the Paul Johnsons don't know where they stand. They want to identify with 'the oppressed', with the underdogs, but if in the process, they are rejected because of their class background, then short of a chameleon shift from red to blue, they have only one other path and that is to reject both sides. This leave them in a lonely, isolated position. They become misfits ... trapped by their very uniqueness and individualism.*

*Where will ye stand, Mr. Brown, when the fascists walk down the street? Where will ye stand?*

\* \* \*

I was uneasy in my conscience. I wasn't worried about betraying my middle-class origins but rather slinking back into the middle class again.

Why was I uneasy? It didn't make sense. The following are facts I had recorded from newspaper articles:

*1. Comparison of teacher's annual wages in Quebec with teachers in other Provinces:*

*For teachers with certification and 10 years experience:*

- Quebec: \$11,606
- B.C. \$16,925
- Alberta: \$17,800
- Ontario: \$19,710

Points: (1) Teachers in Quebec were devalued vis-à-vis other Provinces  
 (2) If I moved to Ontario, my wage would increase 44%! It was unfathomable.

2. Comparison of teacher's annual wage with other employees

- Quebec 1<sup>st</sup>. year teacher: \$8,232
- Garbage Collector: \$10,500
- Grocery Clerk: \$11,674
- Construction Laborer: \$13,000
- Auto Assembly: \$13,300
- RCMP Constable: \$16,100

Points: (1) A teacher in Quebec with a B.A. and a Diploma in Education (like me) was Making \$2,268 less than a garbage collector and only **half** what Mr. Plod the policeman was making!!

(2) The whole socialist world view was based on the 'oppressed working class'. **WHO WAS 'THE WORKING CLASS' IN THIS TABLE? AND WHO WERE 'THE OPPRESSED'?** I was indoctrinated with the view that teachers, by definition, were 'white collar' and middle class, while garbage collectors, construction laborers and assembly workers were, again by definition, blue collar and 'working class'.

(3) Didn't teachers have a right to be angry? Didn't they have a right to go on strike? And meanwhile, I was a teacher who was living in slum rental housing, had no savings, and no job security (in fact I was probably going to be laid off in a few months). Didn't I have a right to be angry?

2. In the previous year, 1976, the Montreal Olympics had cost \$1,200,000,000 for 15 days (= \$80,000,000 per day) while the education budget was \$2,223 million (= \$6.10 per student per day,

Point: Not just teachers, but students and education as a whole were grossly undervalued. It was outrageous.

So, why was I uneasy? Maybe because, in a political sense, being a teacher wasn't enough. In terms of grand ideals of changing society, it was a cop-out. Would Che Guevara have settled for being a teacher? Would Gandhi? Jonathon Kozol had, but over and above being a teacher, he had recognition for his political involvement. The Chameleon had changed colors but underneath there remained the Sedbergh values of 'strain and struggle might and main, scorn defeat and laugh at pain' as well as 'excellence' and 'total commitment'. I hadn't yet excelled as a teacher and I hadn't yet totally committed myself to struggle against the injustices I abhorred. Intellectually, I had even accepted that violence was often necessary to achieve meaningful social change (how could anyone with even a basic grasp of world history deny that?) I had had years of basic training to be a soldier. My uneasiness was

that by becoming a teacher, I was turning my back on militant direct action. And Iain Anderson, of all people, was the person who most pricked my conscience – because of his emerging career as a politician of The Radical Left. Damn him! Where was his conscience with respect to betraying me over Lesley? And I knew that the politically correct response to that attitude was: ‘oh but you are putting the personal above politics’.

A few years previous, I had seen a movie that had really reflected my sense of inner torment about how to be conscientious in the best possible way. That movie was The Ruling Class with Peter O’Toole, based on the play by Peter Barnes. Peter O’Toole plays the part of ‘Jack’, an English aristocrat who for eight years has been institutionalized as a schizophrenic due to the fact that he sees himself as the second coming of Jesus Christ. When his father dies unexpectedly, the family title and wealth is passed on to Jack. The relatives are dismayed and develop a complex scheme to trick Jack out of his position. They hire a demonic psychiatrist to ‘deprogram’ Jack – to break him down. This he manages to do, and from this point on, we see Jack changing from a truly loving, caring person (in effect, he ‘is’ Jesus) to someone who learns that society values power and position more than compassion. He gradually learns how to become deceitful, manipulative and ruthless. By the end of the film, he has become transformed into a monster, ‘Jack The Ripper’ to be precise, successfully performing in the House of Lords by day and murdering prostitutes at night. Everything about this movie resonated deeply. It showed so clearly that while society used religion and pop mythology to perpetuate the idea that it was ‘love that makes the world go round’, in reality it wasn’t love but power that guided and determined all social interaction. I wanted to be caring and compassionate. I wanted power too, but not *over* people, rather power within myself and power shared with others. I wanted a just distribution of power. Capitalism encouraged free enterprise – that was fine. But it also rested on a system of power differentials that were perpetuated by inheritance, ownership of land and property and bank interest rates that favored the wealthy and penalized the poor. How could I not accept the basic tenets of socialism!?

‘Socialist Humanism’ was the political ideology to which I could most easily relate. But running through this humanism was a deep vein of conservatism in the sense of both retaining what was worthwhile and by doing so not wasting valuable energy and resources. From my youth, I recalled people on the radio talking about small ‘c’ conservatism and big ‘C’ Conservatism, but most people didn’t seem to be aware of the difference.

I hated mindless consumerism and the ‘disposable society’. I hated material acquisition that was not based on necessity. Both Christ and Gandhi had advocated giving away your possessions. Both my family and my school had trained me, albeit unknowingly, in the ways of ‘Buddhist economics’. Perhaps I was earning less than a garbage collector, but I was much better off than I had ever been before in my life. It was all relative.

For better or worse, I had come to the conclusion that my vocation was in education. I was absolutely certain that any efforts to illumine, to inform, to enlighten, through spreading the light of knowledge were worthwhile. I was uncomfortable that I didn’t seem to fit into any clearly defined socio-political grouping, but I had accepted – at least in principle - that my ‘constituency’ was going to be my students and my ‘riding’ was going to be my classroom.

I had come to realize that power and love seemed to underlie everything and when I came across Martin Buber’s poem of that title, I felt my view was both validated and expanded:

*POWER AND LOVE*  
*by Martin Buber*

*Our hope is too new and too old  
I do not know what would remain to us*



*Were love not transfigured power  
And power not straying love  
Do not protest: "Let love alone rule!"  
Can you prove it true?  
But resolve: every morning  
I shall concern myself anew about the boundary  
Between the love-deed-Yes and the power-deed-No  
And pressing forward honor reality*

*We cannot avoid  
Using power,  
Cannot escape the compulsion  
To afflict the world,  
So let us, cautious in diction  
And mighty in contradiction,  
Love powerfully*



## 21.

With the news in the Spring of 1977 that I would not be rehired at Laval Catholic High School due to 'surplus de personnel', my attention increasingly focused on the upcoming summer.

My plans were in place for three separate trips: first, a visit to see Jerry in Halifax where he was working at the Neptune Theatre; second, the momentous visit to Edinburgh; and third, a cross-Canada trip to Vancouver to see my friend Martin.

In a letter I had received from Martin earlier, he had described the job situation in Vancouver as "grim" and the people as "laid back ... i.e. a state somewhat like being permanently stoned". Martin had landed a job with a L.I.P. (Local Initiatives Project), setting up programs for ex-mental patients. His view of the job was telling:

*"The people are really hard for me to cope with. They've been misused and downtrodden, or else they're looking for a free ride. One group doesn't need sympathy and yet that's all I feel for them. The other side doesn't need my disgust but I can't stop it yet. I guess I'll learn humility, but I feel like my defenses are falling down if I let out compassion. How can I make it in the big time if I don't learn compassion?"*

Martin had offered to put me up during my stay in Vancouver and I had transportation worked out – John Cassidy, my Special Ed. colleague at Laval was also interested in seeing the west coast and had agreed to drive us there and back.

Whereas I planned to spend at least a couple of weeks in Vancouver, the trip to Halifax was going to be a short one, squeezed in between the end of school and my flight to the U.K. on July 4<sup>th</sup>. I had decided to drive to Nova Scotia in my old Ford Falcon and in order to feel more secure about the trip, I had decided to take it into the school automechanics shop for low-cost repairs. I was told that I should leave it there for two to three days.

On the second day, I got a call from the shop teacher telling me that three students had taken the car for a quick spin around the school grounds and, in the process, had managed to back it into a fire hydrant. The result was a broken tail-light.

The students concerned were three tall, tough-looking guys named Eddie, Gaetano and Nick. I had decided that the best approach under the circumstances was to tell them to fix the damage and I would say nothing more about it. I expected them to be grateful but instead they seemed surly when I told them this. However, I took that as being part of the Italian macho 'can't-lose-face-to-a teacher' attitude.

The first problem was that when I came to pick up the car a couple of days later, they hadn't done the work. I hardened my tone somewhat and told them that I expected it to be done by the end of the week. Their surliness now bordered on rudeness but they agreed, after a fashion.

Later that day, I encountered the three of them in the school yard. Nick, the tallest and most aggressive of the trio, then proceeded to deliver a not-so-veiled threat.

"Hey, Mr. Brown, you know we're not used to teachers getting tough with us. Like you should know that bad things can happen to teachers if they do that ... like broken legs or smashed knee-caps."

Nothing in my experience had prepared me for this level of provocation. I had been told that the Italian mafia connections were strong in the Laval community, and I didn't doubt it. However, I couldn't back down. I ignored his threat and told them that I expected my car to be fixed by the

arranged time and if it wasn't, I would be forced to take further action.

On Friday, I went to the auto-mechanics shop and there was my car. A tail-light had been installed but the fibre-glass work around it was sloppy to say the least. I decided not to press the matter further and set off for downtown.

Half-way back, on the Decarie Expressway, I became aware of a disturbing juddering sensation. I kept driving and made it back to St. Dominique. I told my house-mate Roger about it and he suggested that we look at the wheels. We took off the hub-caps and to my horror, discovered that all four bolts on the right back wheel were loose – very loose. It was clearly sabotage and one that could easily have resulted in my death.

I felt shocked, scared, angry and outraged. So this is what you got when you were fair and reasonable! If they were capable of this, then what else might I expect in the time that remained at L.C.H.S.? Suddenly, I felt very vulnerable – not emotionally, which I was used to, but physically vulnerable. I began to picture ways in which they could ambush me and cripple me with crowbars. This wasn't paranoia – they had already acted on their threat.

For the next week, I was very vigilant about where I went, and I didn't replace the hub-caps so that I could guard against a repeat performance. I knew it was useless to make any allegations. The circumstantial evidence was strong but I couldn't prove anything. All I wanted now was to finish up my time at L.C.H.S. and get the hell out of there.

What bothered me was that the behaviour and attitude of these three seventeen year-olds was an extension of the anger I had seen simmering in some of my fourteen year-olds, for example Normand. A lot could happen in those crucial three years between fourteen and seventeen.

But in those final days at Laval, I also realized that as far as *my* kids were concerned, I loved them all. I had succeeded in winning their trust, respect and affection. It was real. I was sad at the prospect of leaving. Once again the hard work of building up a solid foundation had been rendered useless. I would have loved to have had the opportunity to see real growth and learning take place by being with the same kids for another year or two. The most important thing was that I had won the battle with myself. I had completed the year. I hadn't quit.

George was distraught when I told him I would not be returning. He wanted to keep contact and I promised him that he could visit and we could go to McDonalds for a hamburger. He did come a couple of times and then one day I got a call from John Cassidy telling me that he had heard that George's father had decided to send George back to Argentina to attend a military academy - presumably to 'knock some sense into him'. My heart sank. How incredibly stupid! I hoped he would survive.

\* \* \*

The summer had come. I had finished at Laval and the trip to Edinburgh was only a few weeks away. There had been a flurry of letters back and forth between my mother and I.

*Extracts: letter to my mother; 20/4/77*

*I appreciate the fact that Dad told you to tell me that my room was ready for me. However it has not changed my decision. Let me give the reasons why I think it is better for everyone concerned if I do not stay at home.*

*The fact of the matter, Mum, is that we are not, and have not been a happy family. The truth is that both as a teenager returning from Sedbergh and as a young*

*man in my twenties, my sojourns in Edinburgh were consistently marked by a feeling of anxiety, crisis and general oppression. . .*

*I want to see you this summer, Mum, and if possible, I want to establish some genuine relationship with Dad. However, I feel no duty or obligation to stay at home. I do not want to, nor will I, sit at a table and endure the slights and offensive remarks that are very much a part of my memories of Dad. I do not want to sit in the living-room and be subjected, day after day, to Dad's negative opinions of me, or Joy or Robin, or the world in general.*

*What do I want? As regards Dad, I want to give him a last chance to accept me and respect me as a human being, as a man, and as his son. And I want to give him the chance of allowing me to get to know him better. It is sad but true that whereas I could write a book of Dad's opinions, I could barely write a page on his personal history – his life, his family background, his roots . . . I believe that talking about this would give Dad and I a link, and an important link. In the tape that I am going to send him, I will assure him that I am interested in listening to what he has to say.*

*Extracts: letter from my mother; 15/5/77*

*Of course we quite appreciate the reason why you would prefer to have accommodation at the University of Edinburgh residence during your stay here. Daddy said the other day, "away with doom and gloom!" And of course he's right. We all need cheerful company and Daddy is in no condition to be in any way emotionally upset . . . he once had a nervous breakdown and a doctor told him it was 'anxiety neurosis'. He is calmer now and we are more at peace than ever before, and the three of us must keep it that way . . . avoid emotionally charged topics at all costs . . . we all have a great deal to be thankful for and don't let's forget it.*

I had told my mother that I had prepared a script for the tape I intended to send my father but I hadn't yet shared it with her. The matter of where to stay was settled. I was not going to stay with my parents. However the larger issue of whether or not to see my father at all had not been resolved. The tape script represented a comprehensive account of my truth and, ideally, I wanted to present this to my father and get some response from him prior to arriving in the U.K. The nature of his response would determine whether or not I saw him.

*Extracts: script for tape to be sent to my father*

*I am sending you this tape Dad, as a final gesture on my part of my willingness to understand you, and be understood by you. In less than eight weeks now I shall be in Edinburgh for a three-week stay. The option is simple – either we see each other, or we do not. I feel strongly that prior understanding and agreement on both our parts is a prerequisite to any meetings between us.*

*You used to say to me, 'in Life you have to prove yourself again and again and again.' Well, I feel that I have proved myself to you, and to myself. The question should perhaps rather be, 'do you not have to prove yourself to me?' Just because you are my father do you dare assume my love and respect and loyalty, no matter what you do. Do you not care? And if you don't, why don't you? What I am saying Dad is that I am now testing you. The test is simple and fair. All you have to do is to prove to me that you have the courage to listen to my definition of reality and to give me some honesty and truthfulness in exchange. If you will not (for it is not a case of cannot), then there is no point to our meeting in Edinburgh. Having said this, I hope and trust that you will listen and that you will respond – in one way or another.*

*I used to want so badly for us to be a happy family. And there were some happy times. I have good memories of how you treated me when I was young – walks up Arthur's Seat, encouragement for my rugby and cricket endeavors, post International Rugby game tea parties, taking Robin, Joy and I to a Halloween party in the Borders, visits by American relatives, and of course, above all, Gullane and Dirleton – the happiest memories, I think, for all of us.*

*I have very unhappy memories of my teens. I was the only boy in Powell House who was excited to get back at the beginning of a new term, and who dreaded the start of the holidays. The pressures at home were immense. Suddenly nothing was good enough. The constant refrain was about how these were 'the most important days of my life' and if I didn't make it now I would be doomed ... and damned. I proved myself in so many ways to you and yet it was never enough. I tried to please both you and Mum ... in sports, in music, in my academic work and in the C.C.F. I wanted by so doing to see both of you become happier people. I became desperate for your respect, your trust, your acceptance, your love – or at the very least, recognition and credit for my efforts.*

*The real problem came when the two of you started issuing contradictory exhortations. You wanted me to go into the Army and Mum categorically did not want me to go into the Army. Now I really did have a choice to make. I could not please you both. What made that choice especially hard was the fact that I was not at all well equipped to make independent decisions. Our family was far from being democratic in structure, and likewise at public school one was told, not asked what to do. Nobody had ever really been interested in 'what I wanted' before. However, there was one way out of the Army dilemma. Both you and Mum had said that you would be delighted and proud to see me go to University.*

*Well, despite being in entirely the wrong academic area for three whole years, I did manage to get to University. Three more years of intense academic effort and I got my B.A. I had proved myself once again. I felt I had every reason to believe that you and Mum were proud of me. I had not only got a B.A. but I had got accepted into a Master's Program at one of the best graduate schools in the world. Was this not something for a parent to be proud of?*

*Apparently not. Rather it seemed as if I was someone to be identified with hippies or at least irresponsible youth. I suppose the real problem was that when I came back from Canada, I started standing up to you Dad. I could no longer watch you mock and offend Mum. No longer could I play the go-between role for you and Mum. No longer could I be the son who would go to any lengths to please you both. In terms of your relationship with Mum, I was forced to take sides. And in my eyes, at that time, all I could see was Mum trying to care for you and you hurting Mum in return. In all honesty, could you really, in your heart, be proud of a son who would show so much fear of his father as to continue to accept and play along with such a situation? Well could you?*

*I don't think so Dad, I really don't. I wonder if you remember as clearly as I, an incident where, following a shouting match between you and I, you opened up and gave me your real feelings – about yourself, about your life, about Mum, about the family. This is how I described the incident in a letter to Mum:*

*'On one memorable occasion in Edinburgh in 1971, he invited me to have a beer with him. As we sat there in a state of weary truce, slowly and almost miraculously, his face began to soften, his tone of voice lost the usual gruffness and pompous cant, and he began to open himself. For the first and last time in my memory, he frankly and honestly expressed his real feelings. He talked sadly and at times remorsefully about himself, his life, his relationship with you, and his relationship*

*with us children. He talked more of his failures than his successes. He was open and direct and real. It was so beautiful and I loved him for it. I felt a whole new kind of relationship with him could begin. But sure enough, next morning, he passed me in the corridor and muttered something about 'oh I don't know what I was talking about last night ... lot of nonsense ... just forget it.' The mask was back, the defenses had been hammered back in place, the falsity had been restored'.*

*I wanted and needed that kind of honest and open dialogue with you Dad. That could have been a prelude to real understanding, and respect, and acceptance. But when you denied the reality and truthfulness and genuineness of your feelings by closing up again, that was a serious blow to my hope and faith.*

*And then there was your postcard comparing me to Ian Cumming, with its closing line; 'I like to think that we never consciously let the side down.' That marked the point when I ceased wanting to have anything to do with you. Not only had I not done anything intentionally to hurt you; on the contrary, I had done my best to please you, to live up to your expectations, to get you to understand me, to accept me, and trust me. I didn't deserve your abuse. I lost respect for you and felt forced to reject you. All I was left with was a feeling of intense anger towards you, and a desire to be as far away from you as possible.*

*So what of life since that time – since L.S.E? Well, I reacted against both too much book-learning and too sheltered a life. I decided I wanted to experience Life from the other side of the tracks. I asked myself how I could work with underprivileged children as a teacher without really understanding their situation, and how could I really understand their situation without living it? Immersion in a live situation would bring a far deeper understanding of human and social problems than immersion in books could ever bring. I know we would both agree about that.*

*So for most of my 20's this is what I did. But you and Mum neither seemed to understand nor trust the purpose behind what I was doing. You thought that I was ruining my life, sliding uncontrollably down the social scale, etc. without realizing that it was a voluntary act on my part; it was something I was doing consciously and deliberately. I did not intend to spend the rest of my life as a factory worker, or dishwasher, or floor-cleaner.*

*I needed your trust. I needed your understanding that I was going through the difficult process of 'finding myself'. And I was doing it the hard way this time. Not with the aid of scholarships or references, but through complete self-reliance.*

*And I did find myself. My role in life is clear to me now – to teach, to organize, and to express myself through writing and through music. I am strong now inside. I know my principles, I know my philosophy, I know how to make decisions and on what foundations those decisions rest. I know what my skills and abilities are, and I know how and where to put them to use. I am not the rudderless ship I once was, being tossed this way and that on a sea of others' opinions and exhortations.*

*Has my attitude towards you changed? I have, I think, attained greater insight and understanding of you over the past few years through being married (in effect) and being a father (socially if not biologically). I have experienced some of the intense frustrations that can come from the pressures of family life, especially when there is little economic security. I have seen how these frustrations can manifest themselves. I have seen myself act in ways that I have accused you of. I have experienced the bitter pill of failure. I know well the desperate claustrophobia of being unemployed. I have seen my sense of humor stifled and buried. I have experienced how layer upon layer of rancor and bitterness can slowly build up.*

*And I have also seen all of these things in the lives of others. I have seen how a mother can be imprisoned by her child. I have had to deal with the resentful defensive maneuverings of ostracized 14 year olds. As a teacher, I have struggled to give these same kids the patience, the trust, the understanding, the security, the honesty, and the affection that they so badly need.*

*I have reflected on what I know of your life and background. I have felt humbled by the fact that your experience includes two World Wars and The Great Depression, whereas mine has taken place in a era of relative calm and prosperity. I can see how, from your point of view, the world must indeed seem to have gone crazy, and become a sorry contrast to the world you knew as a young Subaltern. And in this very reflection I have also become aware of how little I know of your life, your feelings, your family background, and its roots. I know more of Mum's family background than I know of yours.*

*And this brings me to what I believe you have to offer me, indeed what I hope you will offer me when and if we meet in Edinburgh. Not your opinions, not your jibes and digs, but rather the enormous wealth of your experience, your memories, your impressions, your knowledge of your grandparents, and their parents. I want and need to know more about my roots. You, and your side of the family, constitute 50% of my roots.*

*If you are prepared to share this information, you have my assurance that I will listen and that I will be interested. Conversely, if you broke the spirit of such an agreement between us by lapsing into underhand mockery or belittling of me or Mum, then you have my equal assurance that I will leave.*

*So, in conclusion, I have a proposition, namely a daily 'session' where we could get together and you could gradually (perhaps even systematically) relate to me some of your experiences. It is up to you Dad. I have made the first gesture. You can accept it, you can modify it, or you can reject it.*

*I feel this is an honest and responsible attempt to establish some kind of worthwhile link between you and I.*

*I trust it is never too late to make a new beginning.*

But in the end I didn't send it. Why? Because on the same day that I made a definite decision to send the above in tape form, I had a phone conversation with my mother in which, amongst other things, she told me that my father was 'blind, immobile and was now suffering from involuntary loss of his bowels'. She begged me not to send the tape.

At the beginning of June, I drove to Nova Scotia. The trip was notable for the beautiful mountains of Maine, the rolling terrain of New Brunswick and the cliffs and breakers of Nova Scotia. The Ford Falcon almost made it – but not quite. Fifty kilometers or so from Halifax, the radiator blew and the brakes had developed some serious malfunction.

It was good to see Jerry. We smoked some dope, had some drinks, shared our Gitanes tobacco, and had some laughs. I left him the car and flew back to Montreal. A few days later, I was on a plane to London.



## 22.

On the plane from Mirabel, I experienced the same nausea that I remembered feeling in 1969. As we headed eastwards, my psyche screamed, 'you're going in the wrong direction ... you don't want to go back ... you want to go forward ... for God's sake, go WEST young man!' If only I could have rolled the date forward a month and be travelling across the prairies, expanding my horizons. I was willing myself into this nightmare. What lay ahead? I didn't dare think.

We landed at Heathrow. No desire to talk, no desire to even take in my surroundings – blind and indifferent to this familiar reality. Driven by will-power, guided by tunnel vision. Victoria, King's Cross and straight onto the train. No desire to stay. No desire to hang around.

I began to register some changes. Last time, in 1969, returning from Queen's University, I didn't know who or what I was, save a young man immersed in sociological theory. Now, I had a much better idea, a much firmer foundation. I was a teacher with a union card and brand new credit card in my pocket. And I was a Canadian, with a plaid lumberjacket from The Bay, and mid-atlantic accent to boot. I was no longer squirming in my cultural skin – no longer the chameleon trying desperately to find a way to fit in. I had struggled through the conception and labor of being a Canadian immigrant and had finally emerged as an identifiable Canadian Citizen, with a Canadian passport to prove it. I was older, perhaps even a bit wiser. I felt as if I knew what it was 'to be myself' in this familiar yet alien environment. The acute contradictions, the seething rage was still there, but no longer bursting out everywhere.

'I am on a mission', I thought to myself as we passed through the midlands. I am calm. I am controlled. I am as well prepared as ever I could be for whatever lies ahead.

We arrived in Edinburgh and I took a taxi straight to the Pollack Halls of Residence, tucked in under the Salisbury Crags and right next to the magnificent swimming pool that had been built for the 1970 Commonwealth games. I checked into a small but comfortable and clean room on the top floor. I needed to spend a night there to prepare myself.

The next day, under the leaden gray skies. I made the twenty minute walk along Grange Road towards Spottiswoode Street. Mum greeted me at the door, her face innocent, crazy, anxiety-wild, and caring. "My boy ... my great big son!" she said, and we embraced. But I was only half-prepared for what greeted me in the living-room.

If age now clearly revealed my mother's anxiety and shattered nerves, then the fixed mould of my father's face was a terrifying expression of bitterness, frustration and failure. No longer was there any semblance of disguise. His mouth pulled down, his nose bulbous and misshapen, the skin drawn taught back across the hollows of the skull, and the sightless eyes all but sealed by the ravages of glaucoma.

He greeted me warmly enough. I accepted a beer and we made small talk. It was possible, even for me, in this context to find an hour or two's conventional material from the five or so years' experience that separated this visit from the last. And of course, now I had at least some respectability of being 'a teacher', and with it, a certain poise and confidence.

I didn't feel anger towards my father, rather a sense of emotional inertness, save only for a feeling of pathos and compassion as from one human being to another.

There was the smell of death. My mother told me that "Daddy is not eating anything ... he refuses to eat ... I don't know what to do." I asked whether the doctor had been brought in. "He won't

see the doctor ... doesn't want to trouble him." At this point, I slowly began to grasp the fact that I was going to have to take command of the situation.

I had to leave. I became aware that whatever energy and strength I'd arrived with had been sucked out, past a level that was acceptable to me. *And I didn't have to stay!* My mother and father both seemed to have no inner source of strength. Mother – disorientated ... spinning in a maze ... questioning everything ... past, present, future ... life cruel, a nightmare. I didn't know what my father had left, even the will to live seemed to have gone.

I went to the nearest pub for a pint and experience again the unfamiliar thrill of being free, for what felt like the first time, in the city of my birth. I was free from my parents. I was free to explore. I was free to do whatever I wanted. And immediately I was struck by cultural comparisons. I went to a phone box to make a call but it was being used. A bystander observed this and approached me to tell me where I could find another. *He* approached me! Without my asking, or going to him. And his manner was courteous. Suddenly, within 48 hours, I was light years away from the self-centeredness and rudeness of North America. I didn't flip back into 'being a Brit' – rather I observed appreciatively as a Canadian.

The fear that I'd had on the plane of going unwillingly into the past, was already proving to be unfounded. I was aware of the friendliness of people everywhere, the quiet, the abundance of trees, flowers and open green spaces.

*Diary entry: 6/7/77*

*Dad is lying in bed. He is not eating. He says it is painful to swallow. He says he wants to die and that this is one way of doing it. Mum thinks that he is dying. I do not know. I do know that the time has come for action. I go into Dad's bedroom and tell him that even though I can respect his will to die, I think he should have correct medical information and supervision.*

*Mum is no longer able to cope. The strain and uncertainty are beginning to show. I tell Dad that I have called Dr. Sellars and that he is coming over. Dad alternates between arguments for going to a public hospital, a private nursing home, and why he should be left to die at home.*

*Dr. Sellars arrives and is shocked to see Dad's condition. He says he must be hospitalized and that "private nursing home at £100 a day is out of the question." Dad agrees to being admitted to The Royal Infirmary.*

*I know now that we are in the final act. I gain in clarity and strength day by day. As far as Dad goes, I want to make some kind of peace with him before he dies. I want to look at his photo albums every day, and get him to relive his life from the every beginning. The present can only bring him pain, so let the past bring him some comfort.*

*As for Mum, my role is to know where to let her nurture me (i.e. meals) and where I must nurture her. On one level, this means organizing trips to Gullane, etc. and on another, supporting her such that she can talk about some of her deep wants and needs and fears. I must also deal with her endless, boundless anxieties. "You shouldn't have children, Ian ... muscular dystrophy, glaucoma, history of mental illness," etc. I play therapist by (1) validating her sanity relative to so many around her, (2) building her trust by telling her of some of my own experiences of 'nervous illness'.*

*Diary entry: 7/7/77*

*Dad is admitted to hospital. I go with him in the ambulance, carrying a few possessions in a small leather suitcase, and his walking stick.*

*In the following few days, Dad's attitude, if not his condition, seems to pick up slightly. He begins to eat a little more – sweet deserts, and he drinks the Lucozade that Mum brings him. He is quite animated when I visit him – talks with some zest about the background to the photos I describe to him. Slowly, the scattered facts of his life assume a more recognizable form. His father, his mother, his step-mother, Doris, Arth, Eric and Lydia, Gordon and Tavia, Margaret, his girl friends in London, his days in Nigeria, in Mesopotamia, the North-west frontier, India, his horses, his servants. His family background is so solidly Army and ecumenical. And as I look at the pictures, and hear him expound on his new cars, the travel, the privileges, status and responsibilities of a British Army Officer in the 1920's and '30's, I am treated to such a vivid personalized account from a bona fide member of the imperial, colonial era of glorious Britannia. And it helps explain his prejudices and his reduction of everyone to their 'place' in the intricate hierarchical social order. I look at the incredible squalor and deprivation of my own life compared with his ... I realize how he could never understand the oppression I had experienced in being jobless, friendless, moneyless.*

*After a while, Dad's attitude worsens. He complains of being moved from one bed to another, that one of the nurses is black, that the test for why he was having trouble swallowing kept being delayed. Suddenly the staff of the Royal Infirmary were no longer courteous and helpful but "rather rude and incompetent" (what is implied is that they are not worthy of looking after an ex-Army officer who, after all, had had the services of his own personal doctor for most of his days).*

Back at 96 Spottiswoode Street, everything is also in flux. It looks like we are in the final act. Dad is not going to return. The living room is less claustrophobic. I drink beer and talk with Mum. She gives me a collection of her poems, ones that I'd never seen before. Before I go to bed, I read a couple. The first was dated 1/2/77, and so was very recent:

*Milk On The Curdle*

*The marriage tie – I faced it  
Handicap and all. Hard indeed  
Was I riding for a fall?  
Hurdle: water-splash fence  
Jumps too high for such as I?  
Was my father's bidding common-sense?\**  
*Should I have said  
"The Devil! – get thee hence!"*

*(\* my mother had told me several times that the only time she could remember her father ever talking directly to her was the time that he lowered his newspaper and said to his daughter who was seeking career advice, "Katherine, all you need to know is how to become a good wife and a good mother.")*

The second poem, like several others was written in 1967, at a time that my mother was suffering from a breakdown:

What's The Score? Twenty-Four?

*I sobbed as I lay on Blackford Hill  
Though larks soared high as the sun went down  
In a cloudless sky: the air was still  
A beacon light from the distant town  
Shone out. Grief at a doctor's farce:  
Miserable – alone – and free!  
Near golden gorse on emerald grass  
And Craighouse waiting to welcome me!*

*A complex world, so I went to find  
If they could help resolve my woe  
A two-day cure! I knew my mind  
As sane as theirs: the certain foe  
Un-natural sleep. "Pills. Take these!"  
Then I a.m. – with no concern  
The door's unlocked with noisy keys  
Nurses whisper – patients turn  
A bright light shines upon my bed  
No peaceful quiet. I stay awake  
"Settle with us," the Psychiatrist said  
"Let us help – for your own sake."*

*Indeed they've helped, for now I know  
My place is HOME: my husband's ill  
There's work to do. I'll 'stop' not 'go'!  
You may believe in what you will.*

I had to stop. It was too painful. Time to try to get some sleep.

Diary entry: 10/7/77

*To offset the 'doom and gloom', I have begun pub-crawling in earnest, partly as an end in itself, and partly because I am desperately 'on the make'. I feel incredibly horny. I want and need a woman. It is Friday and I go to the Abbotsford pub on Rose Street. I had previously talked to a New Yorker barmaid there called Marilyn. She had told me to come back on Friday because a friend of hers, Stephanie, would be there. I'd said that I was a musician and Marilyn thought that Stephanie and I would hit it off.*

*Well, in a way we did. We had a good talk, all the while getting more drunk. Then friends of Marilyn joined us and I got into a good old British humor 'taking-off-accents' routine. I was really enjoying myself – aware of the confidence and security of various sources of power – Canadian identity and yet British 'character', intellectual strength, personal power. I felt like a strong, mature man – the opposite of the emasculated feeling I have a lot of the time in Montreal.*

*It seemed, moreover, that Stephanie was giving me all the messages indicative of a possible night in bed together. Anyway, at closing time, it didn't work out that way, and I was left feeling foolish and angry and cock-teased.*

*As a result of this experience, I plucked up the courage to make a visit to an escort agency called Capital Escorts. In my investigations, I was told that in Edinburgh, escort agencies didn't condone anything past 'escorting'. Probably untrue if the 'client' flashed enough money around.*

*Then I decided to enroll in a Bioenergetics 3-day workshop that I had seen advertised at a place called the Salisbury Centre. In addition to being genuinely interested in Bioenergetics, I figured this was a potentially more fruitful strategy for meeting a woman than pub-hustling.*

*Meanwhile, on the responsibility front, I started on a project to clean up Mum's kitchen. Everything in the tiny kitchenette area was covered with grease and grime. In the years since I had last been in Edinburgh, Mum had gradually adopted a policy of refusing to turn on the hot water heater so as to minimize electricity costs.*

*I also took Mum to Gullane in the car. Gullane! What a release for both of us. So close, so beautiful, so complete a place - the sea, the sand, the walks, the wild strawberries, the gulls, the cozy seaside houses ... and of course, the golf courses. Golf - a reminder of the days when, despite absolute powerlessness at home, on the links I could control - at least with some ability - the destiny of that little white ball. The ecstasy of being the one responsible for lifting it off the scarred, scorched earth, flinging it through the blue heavens, and landing it within striking distance of its final destination.*

*This and other trips to Gullane and Direlton were also a perfect opportunity for Mum to talk. She told me how she and Dad met through a dating agency. She told me about the agonies she had undergone due to her knowledge / suspicions regarding the one or two affairs Dad had had as an older man. One was with a domestic help from the Hebrides called Flora or Morag, who apparently worshipped 'the Major', and about whom Dad would make comments like, "how wonderful to see someone of pure Gaelic ancestry!"*

*She also confided with me about her cosmic orgasms, courtesy of her anti-depressant pills. I told her they were cause for celebration not anxiety, and encouraged her to keep taking the pills.*

Then one day out of the blue I received a letter from Jennifer. It felt as incongruous as the letter I had received from her when the situation had been in reverse the year before, and she had been in Edinburgh and I had been in Montreal. She talked of making a trip to Vermont and of her job at the University Settlement. Then she said:

*"I miss you incredibly - there are just so many things that I want to talk to you about - and I want to see you and hold you and be with you ... we will work these things out, Ian ... it's not impossible ... I want you here, I need you here ... the feelings are flowing so much now that I can hardly contain myself. I have been so stupid trying to hold back feelings ... I want to express my love, express my caring as well as work out the negative feelings ... I'm tired and my body feels cold and desires your human warmth ... I can handle your hate by getting your love from time to time ... you'll get mine ... I love you muchly ... I love you deeply."*

Yes, my 'hate' ... what an ugly word; but it was true, I did have hate mixed in with my love for Jennifer, and I did have hate mixed in with whatever I felt for my father. But although I felt Jennifer was remote and irrelevant to the situation at hand, it did feel good to hear that I was missed ... and that I was loved.

My father's condition was not improving but, on the other hand, didn't seem to be worsening either. I settled into a daily routine of visiting him and listening to his stories about the Army. Maybe he wasn't dying. Nobody seemed to know. I called both my brother and sister. My brother Robin, had settled down somewhat (since his return from South Africa), and had started a job near Camberly, outside London. We agreed to keep in touch but that there was no immediate need for him to take leave from his job and come up to Edinburgh.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>. July, I started a 3-day Bioenergetic workshop at The Salisbury Centre. This sharing of deep experience with a bunch of Brits (led by an ex junky from New York), helped bridge the Canadian and British parts of myself. It was good to feel that a person was a person was a person, irrespective of their cultural background. For perhaps the first time in my life, I was being shown the inner pain, anger and fear that lay beneath the carefully crafted British persona. At Sedbergh, the only person who shared his inner 'stuff' with me was John Aitken.

There were other spin-offs. I got my sought-after sex – a mutually desired, understood and accepted one-night stand with a 30 year old woman Patti Purton, and a brief fling with a 21 year old, Mary McKelvie. My feeling was that it was the Canadian 'me', that had been able to pull this off; the British ex public school boy would not have known where to start.

And then there was the therapy itself. In the first two days, I felt I was slowly being prized open. Tears began to flow. But it was not until the last afternoon of the last day that the inmost core was reached. The exercises and experiences of witnessing others' feelings had a cumulative effect; it was as if a drill had been sunk deeper and deeper through the various outer layers of frustration and anger and fear until the trapped energies of pain and sorrow, caring and love were released.

I was the last person to undergo 'group focus'.

I stood in the middle of the circle stripped to my pants, nervous and raw in my stomach, and slowly by degrees my rate of breathing increased and the pain, anger and outrage swelled up inside me. The first wave of feelings were connected to my mother. I began to feel *her* pain, her oppression, her powerlessness at the hands of my father. And I began speaking out aloud to my father, "she never did you any harm" ... "she cared for you, you bastard!" ... and my heaving chest collapsed into hysterical crying ... "IT'S NOT FAIR!!" I screamed ... and I started to feel the enraged animal in me tearing loose from its bonds ready to kill ... ready to seek revenge ... ready to extort justice.

Mike, the leader, pointed to a large cushion on the mattress that had been positioned beside me. He said, "that's your father ... what do you want to do to him?" And I crouched there for an eternity ... my knees slightly bent ... in a wrestler's stance ... my hands cast like those of a strangler ... and I said, "I can't, I can't, I don't want to play-act" ... and my mind said, 'he wants me to kill my father' ... 'he wants me to beat the hell out of that cushion' ... 'well, maybe I don't want to' ... and then suddenly my feelings overwhelmed my willfulness ... something snapped and things began to happen very quickly. Somebody handed me a tennis racquet. I laughed contemptuously and said, "no, I need something harder, bigger, stronger" ... and I looked around, pacing like a leopard, searching for the best way to make its kill. Then I saw a large 3' by 3' piece of plywood. I grabbed it, knelt on edge of the mattress, and with every ounce of force in my body, I began to smash it down on the mattress, my whole body lifting off the mattress at impact ... again and again and again I smashed down ... I felt as if I was, indeed, killing my father.

The very next day, the 18<sup>th</sup> July, my father had a stroke. I visited him in the afternoon. He could no longer speak. Nor did he respond to speech. I sat by his bed and held his hand. He knew it was me. He held my hand and began to stroke my forearm. He responded to pressure from my hand. He licked a finger several times and put it on my arm. And then, in what was the closest we ever got to forgiveness and reconciliation, this pathetic old man, his eyes gone, his back gone, his throat gone, his legs turning purple, his body turning cold, his mind paralyzed, this ex-Major of Her Majesty's Armed Forces, this father of mine, took my hand and lifted it slowly but knowingly to his lips. I cried and felt my love for

him. And yet, as I watched him seemingly draw energy from me, as his breathing seemed to become stronger and more regular, I felt ‘oh please Dad, for my sake and Mum’s sake, and your sake ... please die ... please ... on this beautiful and giving note.’

*Diary entry: 20/7/77*

*I call Robin and Joy and tell them about Dad’s condition and say there is nothing they can do. When I go to the hospital in the morning, Dad has been moved to a small private room. He lies in a foetal position. There is a terrible gasping, a rattling sound in his throat. The whites of eyes show. His face is purple. The arteries and veins are protruding. His cheeks are hollowed in – there is no use for his dentures now. His hands and arms are cold. My eyes keep being drawn to the black hole of death that is his mouth. The doctor tells me that following the stroke, he developed hypostatic pneumonia which led to increased fluid and decreased ventilation of the lungs. He adds that there is no way of cleaning the lungs, so adding fluid, either down the throat or intravenously only makes matters worse.*

*In the afternoon, I return to the hospital. I find Auntie Margaret, Auntie Doris, Elizabeth and Edmond gathered around Dad’s bed.*

*“Have you called Uncle Gordon?” ... “oh, you should have done that, Ian.”*

*“What do you mean he hasn’t been eating? He could have been fed intravenously.”*

*I repeat what the doctor told me.*

*At one point during this interrogation, I ask where Edmund has gone, and am told that he has gone out for a cigarette. It is suggested that I go and join him. I find him outside in a state of agitation. Suddenly he says:*

*“You know, you have been a great disappointment to your father.”*

*When I ask him why, he says, “because you decided against going into the Army.”*

*Feeling strong and balanced, I said: “Edmund, you can do one of two things; either keep your uninformed prejudices to yourself, or else sit down with me with a bottle of scotch for however long it takes and I will tell you my side of the story.”*

*Edmund looks uncomfortable and says, “I don’t want to involve myself in the affairs of your family.” Isn’t that what he just did, I think to myself.*

*Diary entry: Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup>. July, 1977*

*8.30 a.m. The hospital calls and says that Dad died in the early hours of the morning.*

*I inform Mum and then go to the hospital, pick up Dad’s case and walking stick. A Dr. Lowdon asks me if they can do a post-mortem, and I give them permission.*

*Back at the house, I take the envelope that Dad had instructed me to open in the event of his death. Inside are instructions to his bank manager and specific instructions with respect to cremation. He said he wanted the cheapest possible funeral – “incineration, no frills, no announcements, no relatives in attendance, no flowers.”*

My mother did not show any particular emotion when my father died. On the one hand, she seemed relieved, but on the other hand, she began exhibiting signs of extreme nervous tension – like grinding her teeth and shifting her weight from one foot to the other with her hands clasped together. In addition, she woke up the next morning and found that one of her eyes had burst a blood vessel. It looked absolutely awful and could have been seen as a symbol of a number of different things relevant to the situation.

That evening I wanted to go out and get drunk. I called Mary McKelvey and invited her and Jackie to come with me. We had a good time and I spent the night with Mary. That evening, the evening of my father's death. I felt liberated, and I did feel a greater sense of 'owning my own power' (which is what Mike, the leader of the Bioenergetic group had said was my greatest problem). Meanwhile Mum called me 'a tower of strength' to Auntie Mollie and Uncle Dick, and Mary, for her part, said she was amazed at my sexual power!

The next day I went to the hospital and met with Dr. Lowden in order to get the results of the post mortem. There were three basic causes of death:

- ❖ an ulcer in the gullet (4 cms across) – cancer of the esophagus
- ❖ stroke: clot on the left side of the brain
- ❖ hypostatic pneumonia

This trip has helped resolve various issues. With respect to my relationship with my father, I now feel like 'a man'. I proved to my mother that she could trust me and be proud of me. In addition, I had reasserted a sense of independence by being away from Jennifer. Perhaps most importantly, in addition to some peace of mind being gained with my father, I had experienced reconciliation with my past. I felt a real affection for Edinburgh and its people.

*Diary entry: 23/7/77*

*Sent postcard to Jennifer:*

*"My father died two days ago. Partly due to situation with my parents, partly due to the fact that I've had nothing to say, I have not written. However the first stirrings of an articulated scream are being felt, so no doubt you will receive a letter from me when I am in Vancouver. I am driving out on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. with John Cassidy. I shall not see you until I return.*

I left Edinburgh by train on the last day in July with the knowledge that both Robin and Joy had agreed to make visits to see my mother within a few months, and also that she had an invitation from Auntie Mollie to stay with her in Duffield.

Robin was supposed to meet me at King's Cross. He wasn't there. After I checked in at a horrible little hotel on Argyle Square, I called Mum to see if he had phoned. As he didn't have a home phone number, I had to wait until the next morning to call him at work. We talked for a long time and it turned out that he had a neck injury and hadn't been able to get out of bed. We got into our usual bantering exchange, with him feeling the underdog and trying to portray me as the achiever who'd had everything easy and was limited by his college-educated mind. I felt my usual frustration at the distortions of his stereotype. Robin still had no idea of the years of 'down and out' experiences that I had undergone. However, there was no question that he'd had rough times himself. He told me that he had left his accounting job and had "entered service to mankind as a social worker".

*Diary entry: Monday, 1/8/77*

*4.45 p.m. I depart from Heathrow on a British Airways jet.*

*Arrive back in Montreal. Met by John Cassidy. Two messages on door of 3522 St.*

*Dominique, one from Roger and one from the Jennifer, saying (a) the place is infested with fleas, (b) it has been broken into (amp. and tape-recorder stolen).*

*Meet Jennifer and she tells me coolly that she has had a great summer and is having an affair.*

*Unwanted, unwelcome, rejected. Get me the hell out of here. Take me to the promised land.*

*Go west, young man.*



GET ME AWAY

*Get me away from the squalor and the fleas  
The american ex-patriates  
People who speak French when you speak English  
And English when you speak French*

*Get me away from the school boards  
Who complain about  
The scarcity of good teachers  
While propping up the old farts  
And ejecting those with any imagination*

*Get me away from the money-grabbing Anglos  
And the megalomania of Drapeau  
And his Olympics*

*Get me away to anywhere but here.*

Pictures of my mother and I a few days after my father died – July 1977





## 23.

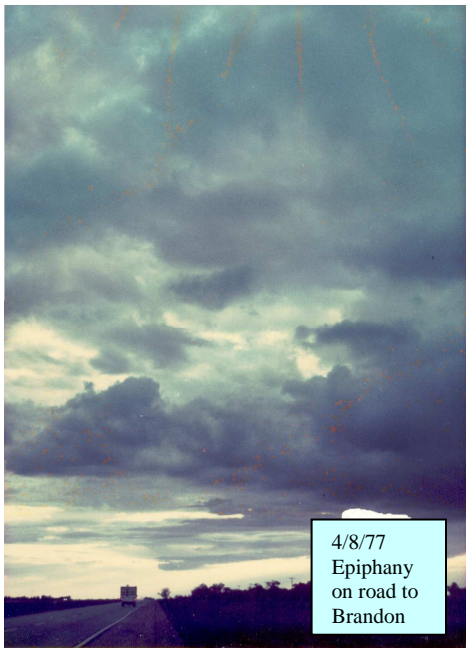
I had traveled West one other time and that was in 1966. On that occasion, I went out to Calgary by train to see Pam, my pen-pal / girlfriend for most of the years I had been at Sedbergh. It had been winter and I had paid scant attention to the landscape.

But this trip was different in every way. As we emerged from Northern Ontario into the plains of Manitoba, I braced myself for two days of unrelenting boredom as we crossed the endless flatlands. To my surprise, rather than feeling tedium, I was uplifted. The two key words that came to mind when describing the Prairies were 'expansive' and 'uplifting'.

Because of the flatness, I found the sky to be immense and magnificent. My eye was drawn upwards in an almost spiritual contemplation of the sky and the fantastic cloud formations and light variations to be seen. The spiritual aspect came from a sense of humble insignificance – the kind that inevitably grows when the scale and the power of one's natural surroundings is appreciated. Unlike the city, where a hundred million trivial things are all competing for your attention, here there was the opposite of the hyperstimulation, sensory overload, and invasion of mind and soul that constituted the atmosphere of the big city. Here, the simplicity and sparseness resulted in a slow harmonization between self and environment.

But the respect and awe was for the natural environment. This was Canada. This was the Canada that people heard about and wanted to visit. I had never had even remotely similar feelings for the social environment – the culture and society of Canada; perhaps, on occasion, for the French-Canadians, although now I was more overwhelmed with the sense of being an unwanted alien in Quebec.

As we traveled past Winnipeg, for the first time since leaving Montreal, both John and I began to relax. I became aware of what felt like a burning hole in my stomach. I slowly began to recount some of my



experiences in Edinburgh. John was a listener. He didn't say much but he was empathetic in his own quiet way. We had decided to spend the night in Brandon. It was a Thursday evening. The sky was moody and dramatic. Suddenly, I was aware of a familiar tune on the radio. I was listening to 'Waltzing Mathilda' ... or was I? A deep, gravelly voice was delivering lyrics not about billabongs and swagmen but rather tortured lines like

*'wasted and wounded, it ain't what the moon did I've got what I paid for now', and 'I'm an innocent victim of a blinded alley / and I'm tired of all these soldiers here / no one speaks English, and everything's broken / and my Stacys are soaking wet', and 'no, I don't want your sympathy, the fugitives say that the streets aren't for dreaming now', and 'it's a battered old suitcase to a hotel someplace and a wound that will never heal'.*

It was the first time I had heard Tom Waits and this song, 'Tom Traubert's Blues' opened me up like a sardine can. I fell silent and choked on my tears as I felt

overcome by intense emotional pain.

We reached Brandon and checked into the Brandon Inn. It seemed like a time to get drunk. We started in with my duty-free bottle of vodka and then went downstairs to the bar. In a long room with a three-piece band playing good country music, we found a lively mix of Indians, Métis, farm-hands and students. The place was packed. I had been uplifted by the prairie skies and taken down to the depths by Tom Waits. I had been cut open and now the vodka and beer were turning me inside out. I started to talk about Jennifer and feelings of pain and anger and love spilt out.

Suddenly I had an irresistible urge to call Jennifer. I went up to our room and managed to get through to Montreal without too much trouble. What ensued was amazing; all my deepest *positive* feelings towards Jennifer started pouring out – one of my deepest being – that Jennifer had stuck with me through thick and thin. The combination of both of our summer ‘flings’ seemed to have released me from the imprisoning role I had felt with Jennifer for quite some time ... a role that had made me sour, resentful and begrudging in a kind of ‘you screwed me around but I’ll allow you to keep seeing me if you’re a good girl’ attitude. This twisted adult logic had been swept away by the abandoned child deep within – the one that had begun to grieve the father I’d never had. I felt caring and loving and vulnerable and defenseless. I was Tom Waits, drunk in the gutter in ‘*an old shirt that is stained with blood and whiskey*’, pouring my heart out to my Canadian wife / partner / lover / sister / mother / friend; saying all the words that she had always wanted to hear from me but that I had been unable to give ... words like ‘babe’, and ‘I really love you’. I could say them with conviction because I felt them, and because the prairie skies and bioenergetic battering had washed away the blocks and barriers. And Jennifer responded in like fashion. And the burning hole in my stomach went away – at least for that night.

\* \* \*

Diary Entry: 5/8/77

*Calgary – yuck! Big, booming ugly frontier town, barreling into the industrial big-time. There seemed to be hostile, alienated kids everywhere we looked. We went out for a steak but it did not help our one bad evening on the way out west.*

*6/8/77:*

*And here we are, suddenly bang in the middle of the Rockies. This is not the Chopin Étude of the prairies but rather Wagner’s ‘Ride of the Valkeries’ – a dramatic roller-coaster. Layer upon layer, range upon range ... twisted, contorted, sharp-brittle edged ... massive reminders of the explosive power of nature.*

*And I reflect on the wonderment of the first white men to set foot here ... not knowing when or how the mountains would recede and give way to the great western ocean. But we, latter day travelers, have the comfortable knowledge that the trans-Canadian highway, this safe, secure ribbon of asphalt, will take us unerringly past the waterfalls, the landslides, the glaciers ... past the forests and the ice-blue rivers, to the other side, to the Pacific ocean.*

*If the keywords in the prairies were ‘expansive’ and ‘uplifting’, the key words here would be ‘overwhelming’ and ‘overpowering’. The prairies seduced you and led you out of yourself, whereas these mountains thrust in on you with arrogant certitude of their power, might and beauty.*

*But we emerge ... into the astonishing beauty of the Shushwap. It is a balmy Saturday evening as we arrive in Salmon Arm. We have a wonderful dinner of salmon*

*(appropriately), salad, baked potato and white wine. Later in the bar, the magic of this province continues as I watch a Chinese-Canadian guy, on his own, win over the crowd with great renditions of Hank Williams and other country greats. And then to cap everything off, an elderly guy in a cowboy stetson, approaches a pretty young gal who's sitting by herself at the table next to ours, graciously asks her if she'd like to dance, she agrees, they waltz around the floor, both smiling, and he accompanies her back to her seat and thanks her for the dance. Gracious, graceful ... amazing grace – how sweet the sight.*

*7/8/77:*

*And the next day, we sweep out of the final range, follow the Fraser river, and eventually enter the extraordinary city that is Vancouver – a city that appears to have been blessed with everything ... mountains, ocean, rivers, sandy beaches ... even a beautiful sky, at least on the day we arrive.*

*John and I go our separate ways and I hook up with Martin and Jina.*

\* \* \*

Martin and Jina were, in my eyes, a true new-age Canadian couple. Martin's parents were solid middle-class Brits who had moved out to Vancouver Island from the suburbs of Montreal to a life of retirement in Qualicum Beach. Jina was from a Portuguese immigrant family. They seemed to complement each other. Martin's idol, for example, was David Bowie – perhaps because he represented the flamboyant and androgynous self, hidden behind an echo of British reserve. Jina *was* flamboyant and was drawn to cool, articulate men – the Leonard Cohen syndrome again. In England, Martin and Jina would probably have never met, but in Canada, the high school and the community college were the great levelers. Also in Canada, socio-economic status (or S.E.S. as sociologists like to call it) was more a function of economic realities than it was of social factors such as ethnicity and level of education. For all I knew, Jina's father was wealthier than Martins'. In the context of their relationship, none of that mattered.

What they had in common was that they were both dynamic, expressive people. They were both capable of quick mutations from being assertive (or aggressive) to being sensitive, caring and vulnerable. To my stoical eyes, they both seemed self-indulgent and a bit spoilt, but the fact was that they had both chosen to be social workers and to work with the disadvantaged.

Martin was the antithesis of Roger, my house-mate in Montreal. He was not afraid of saying or showing what he was thinking or feeling. Nor did he or Jina attempt to conceal the shadowy side of their relationship. They were very 'transparent', long before that became fashionable. It was all out in the open, including discussions about their sexuality. They were the first couple that I had come across who genuinely seemed to have an 'open marriage' that worked. They both had affairs and told each other about them. They seemed to have succeeded in finding the holy grail of relationships – namely a way to give each other both freedom and security.

I had only a shallow impression of what Jina was like when I first arrived. As she later correctly deduced, I had thought her to be flighty, coquettish and narcissistic. Just as I saw 'substance' represented in Martin, Jina seemed to be all 'style'. In fact this conception was inaccurate. Jina had plenty of substance. She may have been a bit of a drama queen but she was not an air-head. The truth was that I became defensive around Jina. Her style was to enthuse about things and people. I also did

this, but if someone else did it, I could quickly short-circuit into the trap of ego-comparisons and end up feeling inadequate. I also get the feeling that Jina was flirting with me, which both excited me and made me feel uncomfortable. On the one hand, I would never betray my loyalty to Martin, on the other, Jina reminded me of Lesley in that it was not hard to fall under her spell.

It didn't take long for me to establish a daily routine. Most days, after breakfast, I set off to Wreck Beach for a session of nude sunbathing. In the evening, Martin and Jina and I would hang out together and get stoned, drink wine, talk and listen to music. Martin even managed to set me up with a job as Musical Director for the 'Cornucopia benefit' variety show being put on at the Britannia center in aid of the Kettle Friendship Society (for ex-mental patients).

*(Martin Baker in Vancouver, 1977)*



Vancouver had been described as a city of misfits, and the west-coast as the place where romantics and idealists had to finally stop their restless searching and stay put – at the edge of the continental mass. Maybe this really was the place in which I could settle down for the rest of my life.

During my three-week stay in Vancouver, I decided to look up Ellie. I dialed the number I had for her but it was out of date. So I called her parents in Sexsmith, Alberta. They gave me her current number and her address. Since leaving London, my feelings about Ellie had been on hold for much of the time. But slowly they had gone from confusion to a cold anger and a sense that I had a score to settle.

She was living near Chinatown. As I walked along Pender Street East, I had one thought that kept running through my mind ... 'you owe me'. I eventually got to the address and found that I had to go down an alley behind the houses facing onto the street. As I climbed the stairs to what I presumed to be her apartment, I noticed a Chinese woman and what I took to be her husband, working in a garden plot. Suddenly a voice hailed me and I looked down and there was this Chinese woman asking who I was looking for. I recognized the voice and with a jolt realized that it was none other than Ellie with very short hair hidden under a floppy hat. How appropriate! Deception right from the start.

We greeted each other coolly and after a moment or two sat down on the staircase. Things got off to a good start with Ellie saying, "you were a sullen young man ... now you are a sullen old man". She then asked me why I had come to see her. I replied that I had written her a letter two years earlier that she had not replied to. She said that my letter had made her so angry that she had been unable to respond.

"I just want you to know that as far as I am concerned, you owe me," I said, knowing that this remark would antagonize her further but at least having the satisfaction of not backing off my gut feeling.

"I owe you nothing," Ellie said contemptuously. "What is it you think I owe you?"

"Perhaps if you jog your memory about London, you can answer that question for yourself." I responded.

"You mean Roy?" she said.

"Not Roy but the incident to do with him."

And so it went. She couldn't or wouldn't see that what she owed me, at the very least, was an explanation and / or apology for her outright deception and betrayal.

In fact, there had been something of an apology a couple of months later. She had sent me a letter in which she said:

*"I feel flattened by the thought of how thoughtless I've been, how stupid, how tactless. It seems incredible that I didn't realize what pressure you were under, that I didn't smother you in care and cherishing. You are my man; we wanted to live together; I got distracted by my own immediate problems, my own moods. I held myself back from you."*

But now, six years later, Ellie wasn't giving an inch.

"You were a crybaby," she said, "and the problem was that you were always jealous ... and you couldn't stand having a woman as intelligent as you."

Somewhere deep inside, I registered the back-handed compliment buried in the invective.

And I made an attempt to explain to Ellie that, in my opinion, it was the other way round. *She* couldn't stand having a man as intelligent as her, a man who was harder to manipulate than most, a man who objected to her trying to have a baby by him without his consent, a man who needed her support or at the very least her honesty when his world was falling apart. My tears were tears of abandonment. I had been abandoned by my parents, I had been abandoned by Lesley and I had unquestionably been abandoned by Ellie.

But I didn't bother saying this. What was the point? This woman was rigidly enmeshed and bound by a world-view that proclaimed that men couldn't possibly be victims and women couldn't possibly be persecutors. This woman, with her brilliant mind and razor-sharp sensibility, was hopelessly arrogant and deaf to any challenges to her distorted notions of existential freedom and women's rights.

So I muttered something about how there was no point pursuing further talk.

"This whole discussion reminds me of the description of the relationship between D.H. Lawrence and Bertrand Russell." I said, as I rose to my feet.

"And who is Lawrence and who is Russell?" Ellie replied, and then just as quickly added, "oh, it's alright, you don't have to tell me ... I know."

And as I left, I had an acute sense that the whole thing had been so squalid and ugly. But at least, short of primal revenge, there was no more unfinished business with Ellie.

\* \* \*

I received one long letter from Jennifer while I was in Vancouver:

*Extracts from letter from Jennifer: 10/8/77*

*"... oh lan, lan ... if only we had had another hour or two ... the feelings started pouring out ... I needed to talk with you, to listen, to cry, to laugh. I do need you in a good way, and I need to see you happy. I need to see you and I happy. I need and want to work out the negative feelings. I need to see us released from hell."*

*"I was doing things arse-backwards, barring feelings, thinking negatively. There is so much I want with you and I was so afraid it wouldn't happen – living together, babies, etc."*

*"I want and need your caring and I want to give you mine. In order to do that, I realize that you have to work through the negative things and I welcome it ... yes,*

*goddam it ... I had an affair but it ended ... I couldn't give the feelings truly ... they're not mine to give to anyone but you."*

*"Jesus Christ, Ian, I love you ... let me love you ... give me your rage, give me your anger ... I have given you cause ... there are not 2 sides to the story ... I went through the sessions ... it's just desperation on my part ... on the one hand, loving you for sticking through it, on the other, hating you or wanting to lash out that you stuck it through while the negative feelings grew and grew."*

*"I'm sorry you don't feel you have me to come back to ... that hurt but I can't expect anything else really and I deserve it."*

*"I want your baby Ian ... will you let me have it?"*

Maybe that's what I needed to hear. I was ready to be a father. I wanted to be a father. I wanted to be a better father than my father had been to me. I wanted a home. I wanted a family. I wanted love and loyalty. No more abandonment. No more loneliness.

I wanted to return to Jennifer. We would work things out. And I wanted to return to my music. On my last night at Martin and Jina's, I read the following from the liner notes on a Janis Joplin album:

*'It was a funny road from Port Arthur to San Francisco and the world. From singing Leadbelly and Bessie Smith and Odetta till when you were singing yourself and becoming yourself and bringing others with you down a road of laughs, good times, broken hearts, fights, lonely days and nights, and kicking it all over.*

*Your singing took you deeper and deeper, higher and higher. Riding the waves of sound to the limit, always at the edges, twisting, turning, bending the words, the notes, breathing on them, screaming them, crying them, whispering, shouting, and laughing from way inside – where it hurts. And when it was over, that kick just to make sure there was nothing left.*

*Being yourself. All the way. All the time. Being yourself – and then some. Not always easy, or pretty, or happy, but always alive even when the hurt and loneliness and insensitivity of everyone was enough to make you cancel. You always had to get up and do it again. There were too many laughs to laugh, too many songs to sing, and so much loving left.'*

On the way back from B.C.  
smiling from way inside –  
where it hurts





## 24.

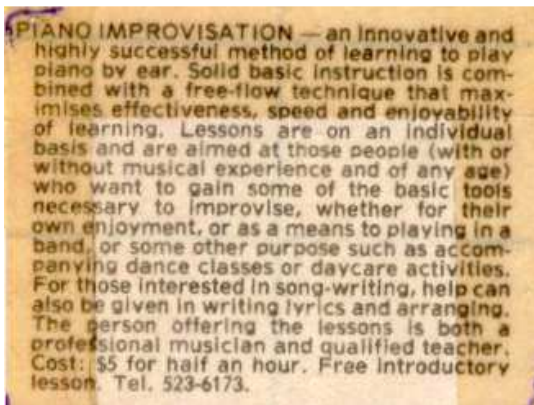
I hadn't realized just how bad the flea infestation at St. Dominique was. When I entered the house, the extent of the problem was immediately apparent. In the dim light of the basement, I couldn't see them but I could feel them jumping up onto my legs. It was clear that I had to find a place to stay until I'd got rid of the critters. Jennifer made the offer and I accepted.

For the next week, I returned to St. Dominique twice a day and sprayed anything and everything in sight with industrial strength insecticide. After the first few days, the majority of the fleas seemed to have disappeared. However, just when I thought they'd all gone, I would feel the familiar tickling sensation in the hairs on my lower shins.

Meanwhile, during that week, Jennifer and I experienced an extraordinary breakthrough. We entered a kind of blissful, honeymoon-like re-union. We talked and joked, we went out and did things with Krista, and we had non-stop sex. All of a sudden, our struggles to relate seemed a thing of the past.

Circumstances had changed. Jennifer was now the one who had a full-time job and a car. I was unemployed and my car was lying unused and rusting in Halifax. Jennifer had a nice, clean, spacious flat on St. André that was bug and rodent free. Maybe living together could work, with her in the position of socio-economic power and me as the 'struggling musician'. We had both independently decided that we wanted to leave Montreal in a year's time, so if I moved in with Jennifer, it would be, in effect, a one-year experiment. I would have my own room, one in which I could have my piano and one which was presentable enough to serve as a place in which I could make money teaching piano lessons. There seemed to be several benefits and not much to lose. Above all, I would have company and be part of a family again with Jennifer and Krista.

It was decided. On September 21<sup>st</sup>, I moved from St. Dominique, five or six blocks east to St. André. A week or so later, I put the following ad. in the Montreal Star.



PIANO IMPROVISATION — an innovative and highly successful method of learning to play piano by ear. Solid basic instruction is combined with a free-flow technique that maximises effectiveness, speed and enjoyability of learning. Lessons are on an individual basis and are aimed at those people (with or without musical experience and of any age) who want to gain some of the basic tools necessary to improvise, whether for their own enjoyment, or as a means to playing in a band, or some other purpose such as accompanying dance classes or daycare activities. For those interested in song-writing, help can also be given in writing lyrics and arranging. The person offering the lessons is both a professional musician and qualified teacher. Cost: \$5 for half an hour. Free introductory lesson. Tel. 523-6173.

Within a few weeks of that date, I had my first paying students. These included Tobi Klein, Director of the Canadian Psychodrama Institute.

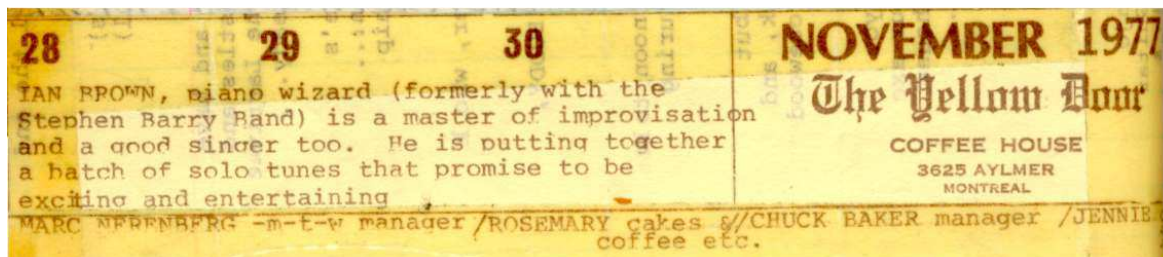
As far as performing went, my plan was to do the open stages until I got offered a gig. This happened quicker than I expected. At the beginning of October, I played at the Yellow Door hootenany. I sang 'Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out', 'Last Thing On My Mind', and 'Satisfied Mind'. I knew I had performed really well. It was as if some blockage in my heart and throat had been removed. I was no longer 'choked up' — or so I thought.

As I was leaving, I was approached about my availability to do a three-day gig. We settled on the end of November. I knew how long it had taken to get together the six or so songs I had at that time, and I knew that for three sets, I would need about twenty songs. So even with two months interim period, I had my work cut out for me.

Diary extract: 30-10-77

At my lesson today, Jane said, "Ian, you have a beautiful voice ... you'd better get prepared to be famous."

Meanwhile, the advance promo for the Yellow Door gig came out:



Diary extract: 2-11-77

*I think the honeymoon is over. Last night we had a row. I blurted out, "because you had your father taken away from you, you feel the world owes you something. You feel you have the right to take from others, to complain, to feel sorry for yourself." Jennifer went rushing into her bedroom, crying out to me, "how could you be so cruel?"*

I had heard Jennifer cry before, but never like this. She was crying hysterically, from the gut, the very center of her being. I knew what was happening. Suddenly, everything came into focus, the missing piece of the jigsaw supplied. Of course - her *father*! She had never come to terms with deep feelings of grief regarding the loss and absence of her father. Hence the vitriolic outbursts against males in the past, and the distrust and suspicion with which she viewed my attempts to prove to her that I was consistent, that I was loyal, that I was honest. And of course the utter rage when she thought I was leaving her for another. It explained the nasal tone, the complaining, the locked-up child within her, the hostile defensive attitude.

She was quite literally having a 'primal scream'. When it was over, we talked. She held a photo of her father in her hand and described her feelings as she looked at his image. She said that she had always felt "unprotected" because of the absence of her father. She had strong feelings of blame for both her mother and her father. My heart went out to Jennifer as I realized the profound importance of the experience she had just had. It was parallel, in its way, to what I had experienced during the bioenergetics session in Edinburgh.



Jennifer was growing, as was my respect for her. She was taking care of herself and taking responsibility for herself. For the first time in her life, she had started a fitness program. She was running, biking and doing Tai Kwon Do. She was beginning to glow.

She had made a hard transition. From being a powerless single mother who needed to take refuge in a dream world to escape harsh realities, she had survived and succeeded in her course of studies at Dawson College. Now she sat comfortably in a full-time job that brought her the same kind of self-esteem that I had gained from the year at McGill and the job at Laval Catholic High School.

And I couldn't deny that she cared for me. The day after the 'father' incident, she bought me a huge bouquet of flowers.

Maybe the row had marked the end of the honeymoon and the beginning of a blossoming of our love for each other. We were even beginning to laugh together.

Of course the irony was that I had a long way to go myself as far as working out my feelings with respect to my father. The fact that he had died and that we'd had something of a reconciliation, didn't mean that I had fully forgiven him. It took me another ten years to do that.

I had been concerned about how my mother would cope, but the immediate signs seemed promising. My brother Robin had spent a couple of weeks with her and she had visited my Aunt Mollie and had had a restful and healing sojourn at her opulent home in Duffield, outside Derby.

In September, I had received a letter from her in which she had said, "don't worry about me ... my income is adequate for the life I lead." She then listed her income sources as follows:

<i>Army pension:</i>	<i>£870 per annum</i>
<i>Old age pension:</i>	<i>£798 per annum</i>
<i>Private investment:</i>	<i>£670 per annum</i>
<i>Savings:</i>	<i>£8000</i>

*Extracts from a letter from my mother: 26/10/77*

*"I thoroughly enjoyed my stay with Auntie Mollie. It was such a complete change – to have companionship, to be waited upon, a household and a garden run to perfection. No wonder I long to move from this gloomy flat yet dread the necessary upset and difficulties it would involve. I have got painters in to decorate the sitting-room and the kitchenette.*

*Robin says he is going to have another stab at social work. His last job at Farnborough was too much for him and he says that at last his business days are over. And his 'service to humanity beginning'. He has started a job in Oxford working with a community project run by the Cyrenians for the homeless. He is talking of becoming a Muslim and studying the Koran."*

For one reason or another, Robin's job didn't work out and in November he decided to move in with my mother in Edinburgh. He sent me a long letter letting me know what had been happening in his life:

*Extracts from a letter from Robin: 17/11/77*

*It's been really good relaxing here, having Mum for company, and sorting myself out. Time to settle in Edinburgh. I have tried living abroad and in the home counties around London. It has never really been a success and I am beginning to admit my limitations.*

*It was a hard decision to make, but with Mum now being on her own in that huge flat, I feel that I can better balance my future by staying with her and sharing the responsibilities. I feel that in having me around, she is able to slowly put the pieces together, and in the cold winter evenings we can be of service to one another.*

*I have met a woman called Nika (Polish descent) in the Occult bookstore on the corner of Merchant Street and Candlemaker Row – that's the winding cobbled street that starts at Greyfriar's Bobby and ends in the Grassmarket by the Cowgate. Nika took a degree in Psychology at Edinburgh University and now works as a Warden for the Victoria Hostel for Women in Merchant Street. She is a few years younger than me, but with a very practical head on her shoulders.*

*I have renewed my reader's ticket at the National Library of Scotland where I spend many happy hours studying classical arabic. The Quran has recently captured my interest and Islam is being subjected to my probe.*

*The brotherhood of man will become a reality before long and I want to be part of that breakthrough from a world otherwise bent on chaos and destruction. I believe that the age of Kali is now fading and almost run and that the light is breaking on a new day over the horizon."*

\* \* \*

I had just turned 31 years old and I had my first solo gig. It had even been advertised in The Gazette and I found myself in good company – to say the least.



The big day, November 28<sup>th</sup>. came and the show was on. I had had my lessons from Jane and I had her support. I had spent the past three months at St. André practicing and arranging, arranging and practicing – slowly building up to the 25-30 songs that I needed. And I had had Jennifer's support there.

Joy, my sister, had been supportive and she, Jennifer and Krista were all going to be there, as were various other friends. Even a group of my old M.I.N.D. students had called me to say they were going to turn up.

It was time. I was ready, or at least given that I was cooled down with one of Joy's valiums, as ready

as I ever would be. I arrived at The Yellow Door clutching a guitar and two thermos flasks; one was a potion for my throat (honey, lemon and a touch of apple-cider vinegar), the other was the same deal except the important addition of a generous donation of Scotch) – for the soul.

On the first day, I managed to get through the gig. On the second day, I got through the three sets in style. On the third day, I was flying. Afterwards, back at the house, I asked Jennifer for feedback:

"O.K. let me look at my notes," she said as she refilled her wine-glass. "O.K. ... in the first set, when you did 'Nobody Knows You', it was very powerful, you could see people visibly moved. Same thing with 'Satisfied Mind', and people were really into 'Oh Papa', especially this guy who I had noticed there every night. With 'Pie in the Sky', people were clapping along with the beat.

"What about the songs I did with guitar?"

"Well, with '16 Tons', people were looking at each other like it was the first time they'd heard the song. It was terrific. And the Paxton song, "Lesson Too Late", it was absolutely beautiful ... I felt such pain."

"I had to fight this feeling that the audience were not giving me much response. I felt I wasn't really getting through to them. I mean I didn't hear them clapping along with me."

"Oh God! The audience saw you as calm, funny and ... strong, not timid. If anyone was timid, it was the audience," said Jennifer lighting a cigarette and smiling.

"How did the instrumental improvs go?"

“Well the shorter one, ‘Stephen’s Song’, I saw your students look at each other in amazement. Everyone was just drifting along with it. And the longer one, especially tonight, what can I say? Absolutely stunning. Fenella said, ‘he plays an incredibly cool piano’ ... and then she says, hmm maybe I shouldn’t say this, ‘I think he’s incredibly sexy when he plays the piano.’”

“I think *you’re* incredibly sexy,” I said, moving in and placing my hands on Jennifer’s incredibly sexy shoulders.

“Oh go on, you’re just saying that,” she replied with a giggle.

And we laughed and slid out of our clothes, like two snakes slithering in synchronization from their skins.



## 25.

The euphoria following The Yellow Door gig didn't last. The tightness in my throat returned, so much so that I felt I could hardly talk let alone sing. Jane, my singing teacher, repeated what she'd said previously, that she was sure it was psychosomatic, but in any case she suggested that I take a rest from singing over the Christmas period.

Slowly, I slid deep into a 'victim' mind-set. As usual, the main external force pulling me down was economic in nature. My income was coming from two sources, U.I. and piano lessons. This was the third or fourth time I had been on U.I. in Montreal, and I was fed up with all aspects of it, except cashing the checks when they came. There was the dealing with red tape, the anxiety of waiting for it to come, followed instantly by the anxiety of waiting for it to be cut off. I was fed up with filling out the cards, recording my job search, hoping there wouldn't be another postal strike, etc. In fact, even receiving the checks wasn't wholly without problems – I was tired of feeling like an unemployment statistic, of feeling dependent on the government.

On the other hand, I damned well had a right to it! Especially given that being a 'sponsored immigrant', I did not have any legal right to Welfare. Plus it allowed me to do what any sensible U.I. recipient did, and that was to figure out how best to use some of that scrumptious spare time to (1) do what you really wanted to do, (2) supplement your U.I. income.

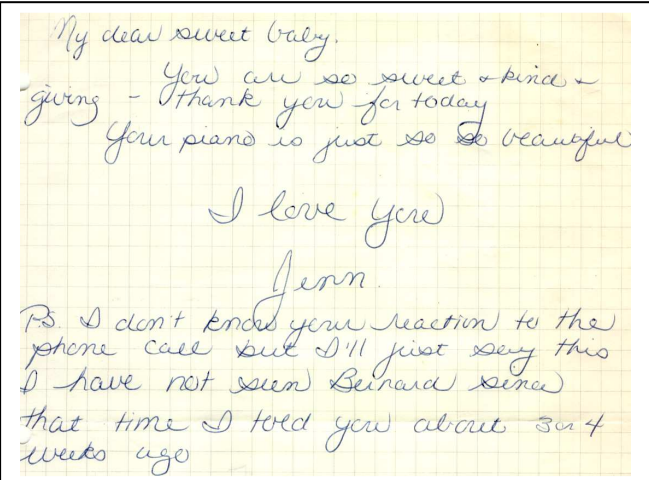
That's where the piano lessons came in. I couldn't have given piano lessons at St. Dominique even if I had wanted to. It was just *too* much of a hovel, by anyone's standards. But Jennifer's place, now 'our' place, on St. André, was *très présentable*. From September to the beginning of September, I'd had about six students. But in December a couple dropped out, and then another two went on vacation.

Clouds were accumulating on the horizon. Jennifer was struggling with her job and questioning how long she could stick with it, just like I had done the year before at the same time. It was role-reversal time, as it had been when I first met her and I did a lot of baby-sitting Krista while Jennifer was working. Before, she would be exhausted from another day of taking care of a young child. Now it was exhaustion from another day of trying to gain some control over an impossible case-load furnished by the P.S.B.G.M. (Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal).

What had started off so promisingly on my return from B.C. was fraying at the edges. Krista wasn't a problem. She had reached the lovely age of seven and we had a wonderful, playful relationship. On the other hand, she had increasingly transferred 'father' status to her real Dad, Ted, who she had been getting to know during summer visits to Baton Rouge.

Two things made me feel vulnerable with respect to Krista; (1) Ted appearing on the scene, (2) Jennifer and I not getting on well.

In fact we were doing O.K. – even to the point of inviting Vera, Jennifer's mother, for Christmas. But one day, I answered the phone and at the other end of the line was none other than Bernard, one of the guys that Jennifer had had an affair with that summer. What could I say? I took a message. The following day, I got this note from Jennifer:



My dear sweet baby,  
- giving - You are so sweet & kind & I thank you for today  
Your piano is just so beautiful  
I love you  
Jenn.  
P.S. I don't know your reaction to the phone call but I'll just say this I have not seen Bernard since that time I told you about 3 or 4 weeks ago

The clouds were looking more ominous and I had the feeling that a storm was brewing. I was right. It came like a hurricane on the third day of Vera's visit. It started innocently enough.

A few months earlier, Jennifer had given me a present of a cuddly turtle (because she said, I reminded her of a turtle) ... hmm ... was I *that* slow-moving?

Anyway, I had to get my own back. The animal-likeness was already known. She reminded me of an ostrich, something about her eyes, neck and legs. What was hard to find was a cuddly ostrich, or any kind of ostrich. But one day, earlier in the year, when I had been seeking refuge in Hypermarché Laval, I saw the most wonderful wooden string-puppet ostrich. I immediately bought it and given that Jennifer was as Aquarius, the first real opportunity I had to give it to her as an 'official' present, was Christmas. Besides maybe Vera would get a laugh out of it, and between the turtle and the ostrich, we would have a very merry Christmas. Jennifer loved it, we all laughed, things *were* genuinely merry.

The problem came later while we were playing pick-up sticks. Jennifer and I were quite competitive when it came to pick-up sticks. We didn't play soccer or golf or baseball together. She didn't do yoga with me and I didn't do Tai Kwon Do with her. But we did play Scrabble and pick-up sticks on occasion. The Sedbergh-lan could not stand less than scrupulous fair play, with whomever that might be, and that didn't preclude Canadians or gays or aborigines or white Maritimer women. I had noticed in previous games of pick-up sticks with Jennifer, that her visual perception had a habit of becoming very selective when there was, on occasion, an ever so tiny, *almost* imperceptible movement from one of the sticks she was working on. I would be waiting for her to curse and hand me the striped master stick. But on occasion, that is not what would happen. Instead, Jennifer would say nothing and start attempting to pick up some other sticks.

So ... somewhere in the middle of our game, I *definitely* saw a stick move but Jennifer protested that it hadn't.

I could feel something about to snap.

"You always do that," I said, exhaling cigarette smoke forcefully.

"I do not!" And with that, Jennifer stood up and exited the room.

Then it was time to prepare the Christmas dinner and Jennifer hadn't re-appeared, so Vera and I finish up in the downstairs kitchen pulling the turkey out of the fridge, looking up stuffing recipes, etc.

We were in the middle of this when Krista clattered down the stairs and said:

"Mum would like two beers, one for her and one for Fenella."

I could feel my nerves stretching beyond where they should have stretched.

Somehow, we got that meal cooked, and somehow I sat at that table until I had ingested both white and dark meat, but that was it. That was all I could take. It wasn't the first time that I had been the sole male in a female hierarchy, and it certainly wouldn't be the last. Jennifer was in her best passive-aggressive, cold witch-bitch freeze-your-nuts-off persona. Passive-aggressive towards me, that is. Towards everyone else, she was Mother Nature passing around the sweet potatoes, stuffing and cranberry sauce. In any event, that evening Jennifer was the Yuletide Queen – with Fenella at her right hand, Vera at her left, and Krista at her feet.

I had already mutated from my Sedbergh-boy persona to the Hunchback of Notre Dame and he sure as hell wasn't going to stick around where he wasn't wanted. I got up, left the table, went to my room, shut the door and stayed there for the next two and a half days. I don't know whether I wanted Jennifer in the rescuer role or not. Probably did. Anyway, there were no rescues, not even inquiries as to whether help was needed – just an initial lull in conversation followed by what sounded like resumed merry-making.

In the end, I emerged feeling furious and ashamed. I felt I had to apologize to Vera, which I did. I had timed my appearance with Vera's imminent departure back to Moncton. I had to say goodbye to her, but this way I didn't have to re-enter yet another nuclear family Christmas nightmare – there had already been far too many in my life.

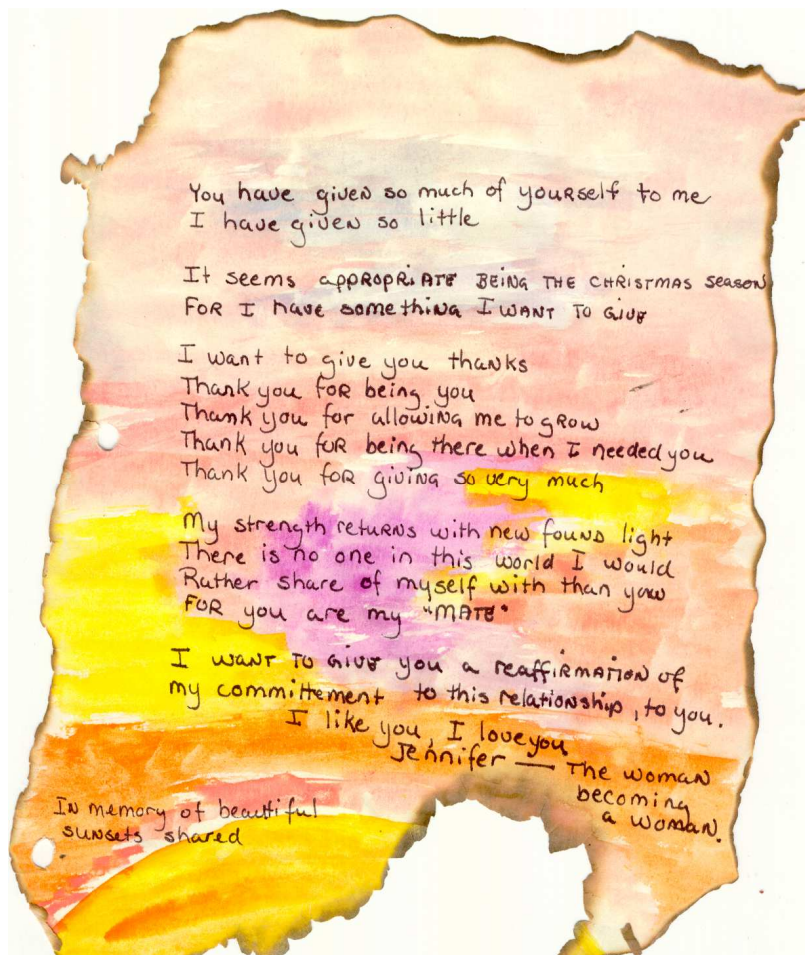


I felt my trust was shattered. Jennifer and I had a pact and that was to support each other through social situations, especially ones like this. It didn't bother me that she had reacted to my initial comment. It didn't bother me that she had walked out of the room. It DID bother me that she didn't reconnect with me in one way or another in the time that followed. It did bother me that she left me alone with her mother to do the bloody preparation. And yes, it did bother me that she left me alone in my room.

I didn't know if I could ever face her mother again, and I felt it put Krista and I in a very awkward situation. As far as Jennifer and I went, I felt 'fight' and 'flight' equally strongly. I knew I would have to confront the matter with Jennifer after she got back from the airport. On the other hand, the part of me that wanted to escape to B.C., was ready to step on the next bus. There was a real sense within me that the only reason I had returned to Montreal was to continue singing lessons with Jane. I was becoming afraid of what could happen with Jennifer. I was becoming afraid of rebuilding trust only to see it shattered again.

However, it didn't take long for Jennifer to start trying to make things up with me.

First she gave me words of gratitude and commitment



Then notes of contrition:

*"I'm, I've let you down ... I am ashamed and depressed ... it's no use saying 'I didn't mean to, things happen time and again and I fail the test, I just don't seem to know how to respond appropriately ... I accept my punishment, whatever that may be."*

Then more words of commitment and gratitude:

*“I will reaffirm my commitment to you and this relationship. I will reaffirm I can give you freedom. I will reaffirm that I want to share and I want to support. I will reaffirm my deep deep love for you and my desire to see you succeed at whatever you are doing – with or without me.”*

*Ian, my pooky, poopsie, sweetpea – thank-you for letting me read your diaries. It is helping me understand the complexities of you, Ian Brown ... the enlightening, despairing, frustrating, life-giving, taking, etc. road towards understanding who you are ... my desire to understand has grown and grown.”*

Finally, she told me that she was going to write a letter to her mother explaining that I'd had a right to get angry and that she had been wrong to ignore the ensuing situation. Before she sent it, she showed me the letter. It concluded with a paragraph about Krista and I:

*“I want you to know that if Krista calls Ian ‘Dad’, it is because she feels it. Ian has done more for her and been with her more in the past five years than Ted has and I feel it is unfair that Ted should get all the credit for things he has not done. I know it has been hard for you to accept things that are not ‘legal’. But Ian is an important part of our family – as friend, husband and father. We are a family a million times more than Ted and I ever were.”*

\* \* \*

It had been 7 years since ‘Love Story’ had come out in 1970, but the famous promo slogan “love is never having to say you’re sorry” had carved itself into both the popular consciousness. I liked the sentiment but totally disagreed with the principle. How could there be any kind of moral fairness without admission of faults and mistakes, without some kind of accountability? I didn’t believe in punishment but I didn’t understand, and couldn’t accept a culture that had expunged notions of ‘owing an explanation’ or ‘owing an apology’ from its every day parlance. I had a growing sense that the women’s movement had reached a point where ‘entitlement’ had come to mean never having to say you were sorry for anything. What I wasn’t clear about was the following: to what extent did my consuming anger towards Lesley and Ellie over their betrayals and subsequent lack of contrition – to what extent did that anger poison my relationship with other women, like Jennifer?

I had long been tired of my obsessive need to justify and excuse women’s actions. I knew and didn’t like the fact, that most cultures were patriarchal. I hated ‘macho’ behavior, whether that be John Wayne or Mick Jagger. I had settled on a rigid distinction with my parents in which my mother was ‘The Victim’ and my father was ‘The Persecutor’, and if anyone was ‘The Rescuer’, that was me.

But in my relationships with women, I had grown to feel like a victim. The ongoing misery of my twenties had resulted in a growing sense that injustice and deprivation did not just apply to others, it also applied to me. I had almost willed myself to become a victim with my over-conscientiousness. But the thing was that within ‘the Victim’ lurked a very nasty avenging angel ... within the sweetness that others liked, was a sourness that had become a bitterness that had become a poison that had become a venom that could, if necessity arose, be inflicted.

As it turned out, I was not the only one who felt miserable. I had received a Christmas card from Jerry that stated:

*“Our lives are in a total mess. Since being laid off at The Neptune, we’ve decided to move to Toronto, but I have little heart for it.”*

Then in January, I got a letter from Martin in Vancouver. Martin’s news was disillusioning, to say the least. His relationship with Jina had been like a beacon of light to me at a time when everyone seemed to be having affairs and no-one seemed to be sticking together.

Extracts from Letter from Martin: 9/1/78

*“Dearest Ian,*

*In sadness I must report that Jina and I may be no more. She left me four days ago and I’ve heard nothing since ... I need you and my friends, I’m so alone here now and going nowhere...I loved her so much, I lost myself ... I feel incredible pain ... her other worlds (her job and her theatre activities) became more dominant ... this is the third woman who’s done this to me. There’s no way I’m going to continue this crap. It’s as though they suck my creativity dry, and then leave me destroyed, lumped in a corner like a discard for Sally Anne.”*

Jerry was unhappy, Martin was unhappy, and soon I was to hear that my brother and mother were in no better shape.

Extracts from Letter from Robin: 25/1/78

*“Mum came back from a visit to Uncle Dick looking perplexed and in a highly paranoid state. She has become so serious these days and so ultra-sensitive, she is becoming hell to live with. She feels that ‘nobody loves me’. In one breath it’s ‘live your own life’, and in the next, it’s ‘HELP! I want to be looked after’. She is on a real self-pity kick for which, sadly, I have no answer.”*

*“I have come to realize that my true vocation lies out in South Africa, not here. The job prospects in Edinburgh are NIL. I have spent three bloody frustrating weeks hawking myself around Edinburgh and Fife to no avail, with Mum to come back to and the prospect of more upsetting remarks and another row. She has, as ever, been drawing comparisons between us and Auntie Margaret and Uncle Dick’s broods. I honestly feel she is due for a nervous breakdown.”*

*“I hope you and Joy can read between the proverbial lines and see whether you can’t entice Mum over your way for a nice holiday in Canada.”*

\* \* \*

It seemed as if my father’s death had opened a Pandora’s box of unresolved emotional and psychological problems in the rest of the family. Joy was caught up in a swinging lifestyle that saw her restlessly addicted to brief sexual liaisons and turbulent affairs. Robin couldn’t settle down, either in a job or in a place of domicile. In her letters and phone-calls, my mother sounded vulnerable. And I was experiencing seepage of underlying distress in both somatic symptoms and in dreams.

I had seen two different E.N.T. specialists – a Dr. Gauze and a Dr. Black at the Jewish General. They had both said that my on-going throat problems were definitely what was called ‘globus’ (or crico-pharyngeal muscle spasm). By that indicator, I was still ‘choked up’. That certainly came as no surprise

given the number and intensity of inner conflicts. What I had to learn somehow, was how not to complicate matters further by feeling that I had some objective medical problem with my throat that hindered me from singing and performing.

I also started to have some disturbing dreams. Normally I didn't remember my dreams, however sometime in January or February, I had a very powerful dream that woke me up and which I remembered in detail and recorded in my diary:

*Extract from diary: Jan./Feb. 1978*

*In the dream I was a German Commandant during World War 2. I was commanding officer of a garrison of troops in an old castle. The action started as the allied troops were breaking into the besieged castle. Another officer and I retreated upstairs to a gallery that overlooked the great hall. I took with me cyanide pills and my Luger. I realized that there was only one last chance for survival and that was Jennifer coming with aid. I didn't know whether to wait, to fight, or to commit suicide.*

*Then I heard the sounds of music and I came out of a room in which I had been on the point of taking a cyanide pill. I looked down from the gallery and saw someone ushering in a procession of couples. The effect was something between a Cinderella-like Ball and a guided tour. The couples were gay and behaving as if they knew each other intimately.*

*Then suddenly, with a shock of recognition, I saw Jennifer with this other man, holding hands, happy and laughing. For a moment it seemed as if she was looking around (for me?) but I couldn't be certain. She seemed lost in the moment.*

*I was crouched at the railings of the gallery, my hands clutching the bars, captivated by the scene below. I felt like a trapped monster, a wounded animal. I shouted her name but she didn't appear to hear. I felt sorrow and impotent rage. The procession began ascending the grand staircase. They were like a vibrant river of color and energy.*

*In dismay I realized that escape was now impossible. I had no fight left in me. I no longer even had the will to kill myself. I wanted at least to be seen and recognized. I considered the final option – of giving myself up.*

*And then I woke up.*

It was back to my own personal mythology of horror. The most vivid myths were the story of Herr Professor in the movie 'The Blue Angel', and Charles Laughton's portrayal of the hunchback of Notre Dame. In both cases, the main character experiences isolation and ostracism, being unseen and obscene. At school I had been the life and soul of the party, but in Canada and in London, I had become isolated – like my mother and father.

The dream was also a story of betrayal. Jennifer was supposed to be bringing help and instead she had gone over to the other side. It perhaps reflected deeper, insecure feelings about Jennifer's affairs. On a rational level, it was fine. We had our 'open marriage' understandings and Jennifer had not contravened any trust on that level, but on an imaginary and emotional level, it was a completely different story. I found that now that I was living with Jennifer, I had reverted to the monogamous mind-set, which meant that 'my' woman had only recently been in bed with two other men.

Jealousy is tied to possessiveness, and possessiveness is tied to the question of 'what I have', which is tied to 'how firm is my grasp on those things that I have'; then, a process of anxious extrapolation leads to 'from what am I losing my grip', which is tied to 'what might I be in danger of losing my grip on', which is tied to 'where are there signs of my losing my grip'.

She is *my* woman. How can I share her with anyone else? How could *she* share herself with anyone else? And the thoughts and questions begin to swirl around with visual images. This person that I just made love to, this body and mind and heart and soul, did in fact, by her own admission, make love to 2 men on more than several occasions.

And the images lead back to more questions ('did he have a longer penis?' ... 'did she have more orgasms with him than with me?' ... 'did she give him french or greek?', etc.); and the questions conjure up more colorful imagery. And these thoughts / images gain further potency by twisting and turning on an emotional axis – 'what if the affair was actually more romantic in nature than sexual?' 'What if they had greater emotional intimacy that we ever had? What if they gave their heart to each other? And so on and so on, in an obsessive downward spiral.

Holding on versus letting go – what a big topic!

I was at the point that a mild squall was rapidly turning into a tropical storm, possible even a hurricane.

I started up my lessons with Jane again. When I told her the doctor's opinion about my throat, she said that I should just ignore the symptoms from now on and just "sing it out". She then questioned why I wanted to sing blues.

"Blues is complaining," she said. "You need something that will allow you to use the full range and power of your voice."

With that, she pulled out a book of Italian arias and before long, I was sinking my teeth into Stradella's 'Pieta Signore'. If the goal was 'owning my power', Jane was right, absolutely right. They demanded both proper breathing from the diaphragm and a full-blooded emotional expression. It was a wonderful experience and, amongst other things, reconnected me to my classical roots.

The more time I invested in both music and writing, the more exposure and feedback I wanted. To this end, I had made a tape of my best songs and had sent them to people like Martin and Ya-el. As far as writing went, I had sent a copy of 'The Man Who Wanted To Experience Everything' to a freelance writer in Toronto whose name I had been given by a friend of Joy. Eventually I got encouraging responses to both the songs and the written piece.

Meanwhile the conscientious-teacher-within continued to sabotage the musician and writer personae as is evident in this letter I wrote to Martin:

*Extracts from a letter from IAB to Martin: Jan. 1978*

*"In my system of values, not only does the teacher's job have as much creative value as that of the writer or musician, it has considerably more public value. Society, or at least this sub-culture, seems to put the value of 'an artist' above that of a teacher, whereas for me, it should be the other way around. The activities of the teacher or community organizer address social problems in a much more tangible way."*

*"In other societies, and at other times, distinctions were much clearer. The status of different occupational roles was directly related to the social usefulness of 'the common weal'. The warrior had greater status than the sage who, in turn, was way above the bard, the minstrel and the player. Material need was considered more important than aesthetic taste, and acting on the stage of life more important than reconstruction of the human drama on the sawdust stage."*

*"But in our society? The boys want to become rock stars, and the girls want to be actresses or models or airline hostesses. Who gets the adulation, the ovations, the hero's tributes? Not the warrior, nor the worker who puts in a solid eight hour day. No it is the Presleys, the Fonzies, the Jagers, the strutting minstrels and players, in their silken threads, hiding behind their 'cool', their melodramatic feats carried out under*

*spotlights to mindless kultur-konsumers. The warrior if off slaying real dragons and they're being fawned over for slaying imaginary dragons!"*

*"The world is truly 'topsy-turvy', as my mother puts it. The utter pompousness, the sheer pretentiousness, the complete arrogant delusion of those who say; 'hey man, don't you see, I'm a musician. I'm an Artist. Like, I have a gift. Other people can live out their hum-drum existences, but I gotta do what I gotta do'."*

*So why am I spending time being a musician?*

- (1) Because I got laid off as a teacher and am unemployed.*
- (2) Because the above point will have much greater impact if I, in effect, remind people that I chose teaching over The Stephen Barry Band.*
- (3) Because I need the good things about music to counterbalance the frustrations and difficulties of being a teacher in a screwed-up system.*

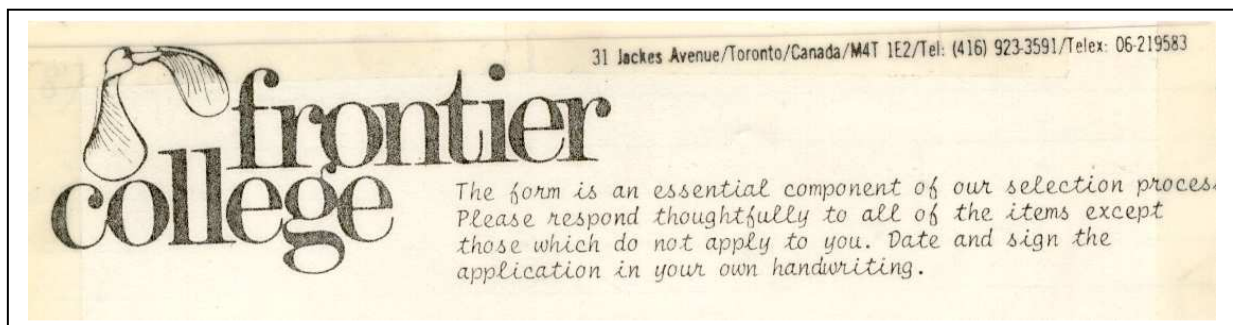
One day, I got a call from the McGill Placement Office. My counselor there knew of my interest in adult illiteracy in Canada (an interest that had emerged while reading Paulo Freire's Pedagogy Of The Oppressed). She told me about an organization named 'Frontier College' and how Norman Bethune had worked with them in the past. Frontier College sent people out to work in such settings as railroad construction and lumber camps, often in very remote areas. The idea was that they would gain the respect of their fellow workers and then be in a legitimate position to teach reading and writing skills to those who wanted it and needed it. Then she said that she knew the Director, a man called Jack Pearpoint, and that she could try to set up an appointment for me with him. She asked if I was interested.

I was very interested. A few weeks later, in the first week of March, I took a train to Toronto.

It was like meeting a fellow alien from another planet. We spoke the same language. For two hours, I was with someone who understood and appreciated me, and vice-versa. Jack Pearpoint was an articulate, dynamic man who clearly shared a similar ideology to mine. He was interested in my back-ground and my perceptions. He said that they would be most interested in employing me if and when they managed to raise more funds. He gave me an application form and told me to send it back to them.

As it turned out, this was no ordinary application form. Back in Montreal, I drooled as I surveyed the questions. Even an application form could become juicy if the questions were interesting enough, relevant enough, searching enough, challenging enough. For example, it was the first time I had ever been asked to talk about both the rewards *and* frustrations of different work experiences. It was also the first time, I had been asked to list 'experience in hard physical work' (a question to which I could devote at least half a page in response following my experiences with Rentastaff in London, and various brief jobs in Montreal).

*Extracts from the Frontier College application form*



Teaching experience (both formal and informal): (1) Laval Catholic H.S. '70-'77 (3) The Alternative High School, '75-'76 (4) Centre St. Louis Daycare Centre '74-'75 (5) Dawson College '73-'74 (6) Carel Inc. - (Language instruction to adults) (7) Kearsal Rise Primary School, London U.K. (remedial reading to 7 year olds) (8) Tarangan'ya Secondary School, Kenya '68-'71

What is especially rewarding in teaching? (9) Queen University Sociology Dep. '65-'69.

(1) Being given the opportunity to battle at/with/for someone towards meaningful goal  
 (2) To get the reward of seeing progress & growth (3) to grow and actualize oneself in the process of (1) & (2)

What is especially frustrating in teaching? the initial struggle to earn respect and trust (a prerequisite to co-learning).

Community work activity experience: Centre St. Louis Daycare Centre, Operation Crossroads Africa, Dawson College.

What is especially rewarding in community work? Seeing people not only gaining personal power (as in the teaching context) but also learning the meaning of social/political power through cooperative work and confrontation (where necessary) with those in positions of greater power.

What is especially frustrating in community work? Subordinating one's own personal power to the principles of the democratic process i.e. having, on occasion to blunt one's incisiveness as to the roots of a problem and to best solution to that problem.

Provide at least 3 names as references. (The best reference is a former Frontier College field-worker). Specify in what capacity the 'referee' knows you. Balance your references.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY:

1. Name: Michelle Claybrough Relationship: Head Teacher (514) 276-3749  
 as M.I.N.D. (The Alternative High School).  
 Address: M.I.N.D., 5550 Park, Montréal, Québec.

2. Name: Heather Williams Relationship: Adult Student (514) 935-176  
 of mine  
 Address: (will have to get it from her).

3. Name: John Cassidy Relationship: Fellow Teacher (514) 625-093  
 at Laval H.S.  
 Address: 20 MARIANNE, St. Rose, Laval, H7L 1J6, Québec.

The above is a copy of the form I sent in. A few days later, I received a letter from him:



Under the distinguished patronage of His Excellency The Right Honourable  
Jules Léger, C.C., C.M.M., C.D., Governor General of Canada  
Sous le haut patronage de Son Excellence le très honorab  
Jules Léger, C.C., C.M.M., C.D., Gouverneur général du Canada

31 Jackes Avenue/Toronto/Canada/M4T 1E2/Tel: (416) 923-3591/Telex: 06-219583

March 16, 1978

Mr. Ian Brown  
3443 St. André  
Montreal, P.Q. H2L 3V4

Dear Ian:

I really enjoyed meeting you last week and I look forward to continuing our discussion. As agreed in our "interview", you are not looking for just any job as a labourer-teacher with Frontier College, but are certainly interested in a long term commitment in a community setting. To this end it would help if you could forward the Frontier College application just to complete our file. I'll hand it over to John O'Leary, our Recruiting Co-ordinator so that as job possibilities mature we can get in touch with you.

We've spent a good portion of our time talking about Literacy. I thought I would write after a meeting I had yesterday and bring you up to date. Unfortunately there are no major developments. My hopes were otherwise. However, my assessment is that in the near future, we will endeavour to make a major foray into the field of adult literacy in Canada. If I can get the Board to agree, and begin to locate a few million dollars (literally) some outstanding people will be required. Should such an opportunity arise, it might be appropriate to your talents and interests.

I am attaching a copy of a very brief statement by the Movement for Canadian Literacy which needs both money and support. I would be less than frank if I did not indicate some reservations about whether the movement is the vehicle to mobilize Canadians to deal with illiteracy, but I hope that will be resolved in the next few weeks. Rather than belabour this issue, I'll simply resolve to keep you informed if and when there are major developments.

I'll look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

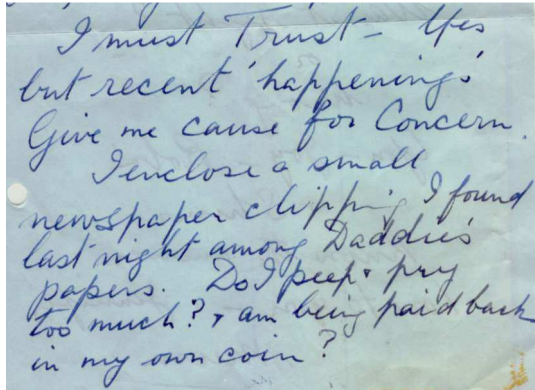
Jack Pearpoint  
President



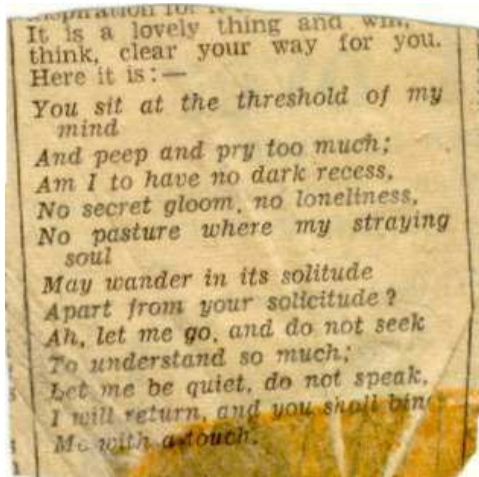
## 26.

In April, I received a letter from my mother that had attached several poems. Once again issues of trust, suspicion and paranoia surfaced:

Extracts from letter from my mother: 12/4/78



I must Trust - Yes  
but recent 'happenings'  
Give me cause for Concern.  
I enclose a small  
newspaper clipping I found  
last night among Daddie's  
papers. Do I peep & pry  
too much? > am being paid back  
in my own coin?



It is a lovely thing and wish,  
think, clear your way for you.  
Here it is:—  
You sit at the threshold of my  
mind  
And peep and pry too much;  
Am I to have no dark recess,  
No secret gloom, no loneliness,  
No pasture where my straying  
soul  
May wander in its solitude  
Apart from your solicitude?  
Ah, let me go, and do not seek  
To understand so much;  
Let me be quiet, do not speak,  
I will return, and you shall bin  
Me with a touch.

My mother had a fixed attitude of 'ask no questions and you'll get no lies' (at least, that was how it was supposed to work). Her childhood upbringing, my father's admonitions to her, and the realities of wartime confidentiality probably all played a part in forming and strengthening this attitude.

In her relationship with me, she didn't 'peep and pry too much'. Quite the reverse; because of her fear, she didn't ask enough questions which led me to believe, perhaps mistakenly, that this indicated lack of interest.

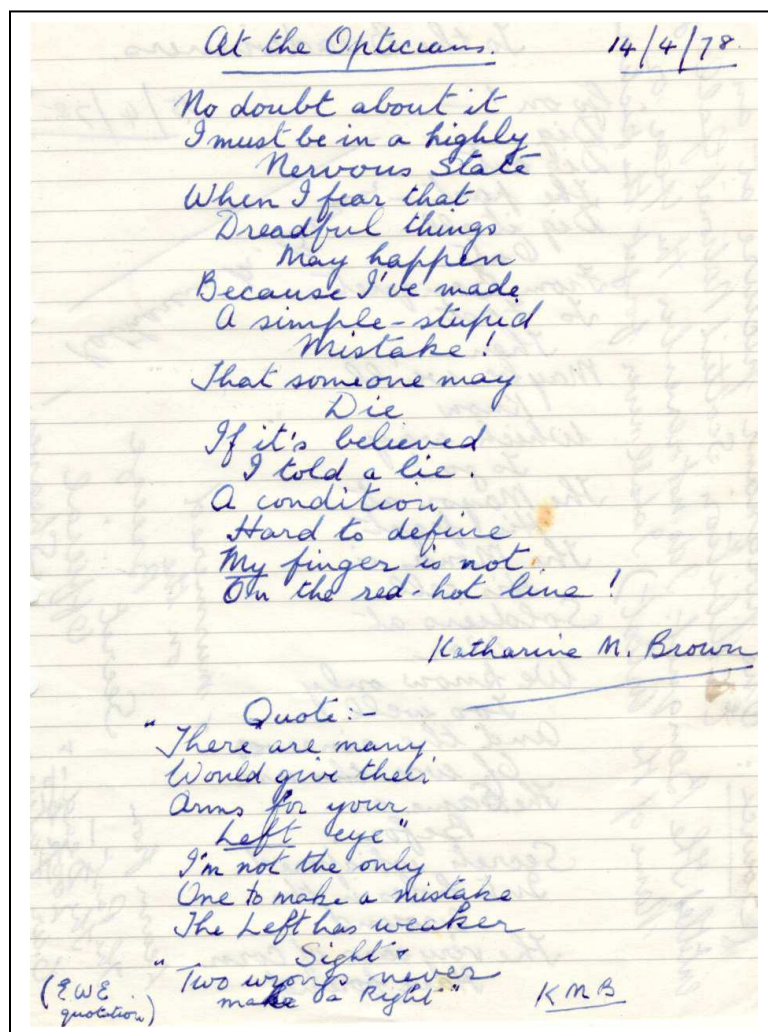
The problem was that the line between reality and illusion got very blurred. My mother believed she had seen me in the streets of Edinburgh, but in the absence of confirmation from the 'me' she saw, or the real 'me' that was, in actuality in Montreal at the time, She would begin to construct her own elaborate and convoluted explanation ... "Ian, I understand that you may be working undercover for the R.C.M.P. and, believe me, I understand that loyalty to Queen and Country comes above loyalty to relatives, so I understand that is why you keep it secret."

My argument to my mother had always been, "Mum, all you have to do to satisfy your doubts is to call me in Montreal, and if 'I' answer, then you'll know it's 'me', and you'll also know that the guy you saw in Edinburgh was not me.

But I was beginning to understand that reasoning in this way just did not work. The part of my mother's mind that had paranoid delusions was not influenced or persuaded by logic. My problem was that I was so attached to reason and logic as ways of promoting trust, that it felt like a double dose of lack of trust from my mother when (1) she suspected I was in Edinburgh without her knowledge, (2) she didn't appear to trust my word when I assured her it was not me that she had seen.

I had gone out of my way to gain her trust. The most significant way that I had done this was to take her side in matters concerning conflict with my father. It was crazy-making to me and deeply hurtful when I felt she didn't trust me. I hadn't learned to accept that my mother's delusions were a disability and that I shouldn't engage them on a 'normal' level.

In any event, it was clear from some of her other poems that my brother had cause for concern over my mother's present state of mind.



I realized I would have to go back to Edinburgh to spend time with my Mum, and I began to make arrangements. Everything was in flux; not only was the plan to move to B.C. virtually settled, but increasingly, I was beginning to wonder if the best way to support my mother was to bring her to Canada.

For the first time, I was prepared to accept my mother's offer of paying the air-fare. The situation was completely different from the previous year. I had been receiving U.I. payments, supplemented by pocket money from a few piano students. I had to see my mother but I couldn't afford it unless she helped.

My father was gone. I didn't have the same drive that put pride in the way of common sense. Some more of my idealism was getting chipped away to expose a vein of underlying pragmatism.

One day, my sister told me that she had seen a video at her place of work, the Montreal Children's Hospital, of a music therapist who was employed at the Alexandra Pavilion of the M.C.H. His name was Peter O'Loughlin, she said, and she had been impressed with what she had seen.

I decided to contact him. I got hold of him a few days later and we had a good discussion on the phone. It turned out that he had seen me a couple of times with the Stephen Barry Band. He suggested that I come in and observe a session.

The following week, I went down to Verdun, found the Alexandra Pavilion, and after a bit of searching, located Peter O'Loughlin's room. For the next hour I watched him working with children who had cerebral palsy and other disabilities. It was a moving and inspirational experience. He made it clear how music could be used beneficially with these children, to help them express themselves and communicate their wants and needs.

He told me that he was considering moving out to B.C. so that he could take the Music Therapy program at a place called Capilano College. He also invited me to come in on a regular basis and do volunteer work. I liked the idea and for the next six weeks or so, I made scheduled visits to his workplace. Maybe this was meant to happen, I thought. Maybe Peter was my guide to B.C. and the field of music therapy.

As far as performing went, I hadn't done a gig since the Yellow Door. But one day, I got a call from a woman called Penny Rose. She was the owner and operator of 'Rose's Cantina', a coffee shop and folk music venue in Morin Heights, in the Laurentians north of Montreal.

She had heard good things about me both in connection with the Barry Band and my gig at the Yellow Door. We chatted for a while and then she booked me in for a two-day gig on May 26<sup>th</sup>. and 27<sup>th</sup>. That evening I bought some wine and celebrated with Jennifer. I had another opportunity to get back on track and show what I could do.

This was the advance publicity:



The gig in Morin Heights precipitated another crisis in my on-off relationship with Jennifer. On the first night – a Friday – things went really well. There was a fair-sized audience and they were very

receptive. I was staying in Penny Rose's house while I was in Morin Heights. In addition to feeding me well. She introduced me to her circle of friends. Their hospitality meant a lot to me, especially after feeling so secluded in the St. André house all year.

Jennifer arrived the next day with a couple of people I didn't know. From the start, she seemed to be in her cool space. She told me later that she had felt insecure because I seemed to get on better with others when I was away from her. I had been looking forward to her coming and at first I nurtured her insecurity. But when that didn't work and she continued to be detached, I began to react. Although the gig went alright, I felt more pressure than the night before with Jennifer in the audience. We had previously planned to return together in Jennifer's car. On the way back, Jennifer told me that she wanted a 'creative divorce', and that she was getting her tubes tied before she reached the age of 30. For me this amounted to three whammies in a row and I knew of nothing to do or say other than "O.K. you've got it."

There followed three weeks of destructive divorce, or at least estrangement, with no talking and lots of avoidance from both sides. It looked as if I would be going to B.C. *par seul*.

\* \* \*

As it happened, just before the gig at Rose's Cantina, I had been offered a job by an acquaintance of Jennifer's. Her name was Margaret Horn. Margaret had done the same program at Dawson College as Jennifer, and I had met her a couple of times before.

She was a full-blooded Mohawk who lived on the Caughnawaga (now called Kahnawake) Indian Reserve, south of Montreal. She was also the director of the Montreal Native Friendship Centre. Like Peter O'Loughlin, Margaret was a Leo. Like Peter, she displayed a leonine grace and power.

Margaret had called me because she wanted to see if I was interested in doing a research job for her. Specifically, she wanted more and better organized information resources for her aboriginal clientele. How could I refuse? Jennifer and I had talked for years about how we wanted to set up an Information Center. Here was my opportunity – *and* I would get paid.

Finally I was gainfully employed again and not struggling to survive within the confines of my home. Margaret and I worked well together and there was clearly an attraction between us. One of the things I liked was how we could joke about cultural differences, while at other times have serious discussion. Working at the Center, I began to see and understand the depth of vulnerability, and underlying pain and anger, of aboriginal people. Once again, like at Laval Catholic High School, I had to slowly earn the respect and trust of others.

However, I was no longer trapped in the guilt-ridden white man's psyche. I had gone through my own deprivations. One day I made a comment about Margaret's beautiful white teeth. She laughed and said, "they're all capped, you should have seen them a few years back". She then explained to me that dental work was free for aboriginal people. Given that I had gone through over two years of student dentistry at the Montreal General Hospital and had scraped to pay the cost of materials for several crowns and bridges, I was both happy for her and a bit resentful. It was the start of a long examination of how the Federal government was treating different disadvantaged groups, from aboriginal people to immigrants to low income groups.

I had another memorable discussion with Margaret in which, after listening to another castigation of white man institutions, I asked her "if you could have what you *really* want, what would it be?" Margaret looked at me and without hesitation said, "we'd ship the whole lot of you back to where you came from." I looked at her and replied, "well I understand how you feel, but I'm sorry, I'm not

going, this is now my home – there's lots of space for everyone." We glared at each other and laughed at the same time. That was the essence of my relationship with Margaret, jousting, laughing, feeling a sensual vibe, and all the time trusting that we could say what we really thought because of a trust between us. It also helped that I was from Scotland. "You guys are O.K.", Margaret explained, "you went through your own shit with the English." I had come to learn that Quebec politics was very complex and the aboriginal reality was just another intricate strand. For Margaret, federal politicians were preferable to provincial ones. On the other hand, despite the fact that the English were 'shits', the historical relationship with the British Crown seemed to be seen as more important than that with the Canadian government.

I started working for Margaret towards the end of May. In the middle of June, Margaret invited me to attend the National Aboriginal Conference, which was being held at the Windsor Hotel. On the first evening, Margaret and I took our seats at a round table in the ballroom. The huge room was packed with Indians and Inuit from across Canada. After a few minutes, I told Margaret that I had to go to the washroom. When I returned, there was a very large Indian man sitting in my place. I addressed him politely and said "excuse me, you're sitting in my place." He looked at me for a moment without moving and then exploded.

"You fucking white men, you think you can go where you want. You're all the fucking same!"

At this, Margaret stood up, and said to the man, "this man is my guest, he works with me, I'm sorry but this was his place, beside me."

The large Indian man gave Margaret a long, hard look, and then still grumbling, stood up and left the table.

I sat down next to Margaret and felt enormous respect and gratitude.

\* \* \*

I had now decided, beyond doubt, that I was headed for B.C. in the Fall. The only question was, by myself or with Jennifer?

In some ways, I felt more of a bond with Martin than I did with Jennifer.

*Extracts from a letter from Martin: July 1978*

*"Ian, leave that town, come west, not for escape, but for adventure, is there anything to lose?"*

*"You've been my distant companion but karmic compatriot for too long – even knowing how volatile we both are, I'm up for it."*

*"I'm going to start singing, you could be a great help to me."*

*"I'm interested in your idea of a Men's Group."*

Receiving this letter from Martin coincided with Jennifer's departure for Louisiana, to spend a week with Ted and Krista in Baton Rouge, from where she was going to travel with a friend to Mexico. It had more or less been decided that we were going to migrate to B.C. together. But even though we had jointly invested in a used Econoline Van (a symbol of our commitment to stay together), there were still lingering doubts on both sides. I had booked a flight to Scotland for August and so I had a few more weeks working at The Native Friendship Center before I left.

Shortly after Jennifer left, I made the major mistake of reading her diary from the previous year. We had an understanding that we could read each other's diary. She had read mine and I'd encouraged

her to do so. I had not read hers, and given my feelings of insecurity about the affairs she'd had in the summer of '77, I was hesitant about doing so. But, in the house by myself, imagining what Jennifer might now be doing with her freedom, curiosity got the better of me.

It didn't take long before I went into one of my major meltdowns. Everything I read upset me.

*Extracts from my diary: July 22<sup>nd</sup>:*

*I resent the relative ease with which Jennifer was able to have these affairs (she once said to me "I have almost always got what I wanted"). I feel gnawing envy and jealousy when I read about the free-wheeling, guilt-free, meeting, talking, dancing, fucking summer of '77. Jennifer, you managed to more than make up for Michou and Ya-el.*

*I remember asking Jennifer at the time if she wanted to come with me. I don't remember her reply, but I do remember picking up on her detached, peculiar, uncaring attitude. I had a feeling that something was going on. And then in her diary Jennifer describes the whole night ... street dance, holding hands, enjoying him playing the male role, going back to St. André at 4 a.m. and then Jennifer leading him to bed and then 'his long cock, soft body'. (That really gets me going, as I read and re-read and re-read that phrase!)*

*Now, when I check the dates, and piece it all together, I can see the whole picture, I can understand.*

*I remember while in Halifax feeling incredibly upset and lonely. I was about to go back to Edinburgh and my father, and some part of me was terrified. I wanted her and needed her and couldn't understand why she had been offhand. It wasn't even that I needed her sexual loyalty – I needed her emotional loyalty.*

*I came back from Halifax on June 27<sup>th</sup>. and she was still distant. The day after I got back, an entry in my own diary says: 'I called Jennifer and told her that I didn't want to see her ever again ... that she was 'off the hook' ... that it was clear she wanted to meet her own needs'.*

*In her diary, Jennifer's mention of the event (her only mention of me in the whole account of that summer) says: 'On Wednesday I had a big thing with Ian. He told me he didn't want to see me again. That night at 10.30, Bernard arrived. I was very upset and let him take control. We went for a long ride and finished up at his house. He wanted me to stay ... I couldn't decide ... finally he led me to bed ... we made very nice love ... the beginnings of some feelings. Next morning we lay in bed, and played'. ('played' ... that was another word that drove a knife into my gut)*

*Jennifer then mentions that Bernard left on the 30<sup>th</sup>. June. And I remember that Jennifer came over to St. Dominique on the 30<sup>th</sup>. and 31<sup>st</sup>. I remember that she was sweet and open and yet somewhere I knew she wasn't with me, her heart wasn't with me. And I remember being on that plane to London, on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, feeling I was going from nowhere to nowhere, a hole in my stomach, on the edge of freak-out, wanting someone, anyone to take care of me.*

*And I try to digest her words and the reality behind them, and once again I am driven to my own diary as a way of dealing with the pain – along with the cigarettes and alcohol.*

*I want you babe. If only you would stop being afraid, if only you would be*

*honest, share with me, see through the gruff exterior and stroke the loving but hurt child inside. I have so much love for you. I want to be able to express it. I want to be able to show it. I don't want to feel afraid of showing you my insecurities ...*

*My sweet Jennifer, I'm afraid ... I'm afraid of needing, of being vulnerable, of being rejected ... baby, I need you ... I wish you were here ... what am I? ... some kind of emotional cripple?*

*Your diary is becoming a daily ritual that I have to put myself through. And the result is always the same. I am left shaking and quivering ... a terrified little kid ... I am so afraid that you will reject me. I am so afraid that if I give myself to you (in a way that I haven't done since Lesley) you will hurt me by showing your caring for someone else.*

*Peter O'Loughlin just left. Now I have 2 men who are up for a men's group – Peter and Martin ... both aware of the manipulations of women and the total weakness and identity-confusion of men. As a woman at the Women's Center said to me today. "I wouldn't want to be a man these days". And as I keep finding, in working on the information bank, there are no services for men – nada. I told Peter how different it would have been had Jennifer been there. How I wouldn't have trusted how she might behave (i.e. not respecting me-her, and me-Peter, and instead waltzing with her-Peter, AND how Peter, as a man, could also not be easily trusted. Peter then reinforced my point by saying that his behavior towards another man does change if a woman enters the room.'*

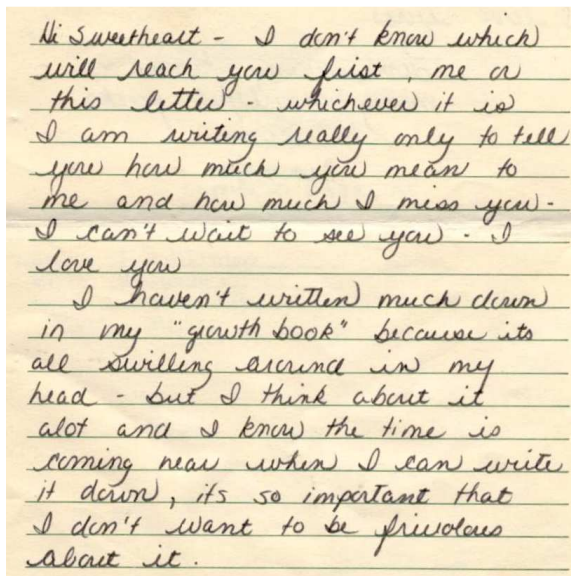
*27<sup>th</sup>. July:*

*Jennifer, I feel so weak ... this can't go on. Every day seems to bring a new revelation. Today, Sylvana said that Ron is tough-looking, a Maoist, married ... and I think, ah yes, Jennifer likes the Charles Bronson type. And then it turns out that Lyn knows Ron as well. She describes him as good-looking, a real mover, quick temper, quick judgments of others.*

*I cannot handle this level of insecurity. This is the third summer in a row. I talked to Lyn and Sylvana about Love and Power and Surrender. And I said how much I would like to track you down in Mexico City and surrender myself to you. To kneel down and say 'I'm weak, I'm powerless, I'm hurting, and I need you'. Doesn't love involve surrender? But then they and I agreed that Power really is at the bottom of everything.*

*Over 10 days now of this insanity. Virtually no food, booze, cigarettes, and a stomach that is knotted both when I go to bed and when I wake up. I don't even know where you are Jennifer. I can't even get in touch.*

Then one day, in the midst of this maelstrom,  
I get a letter from Jennifer in Mexico City. ➔



*Hi Sweetheart - I don't know which will reach you first, me or this letter - whichever it is I am writing really only to tell you how much you mean to me and how much I miss you - I can't wait to see you - I love you*

*I haven't written much down in my "growth book" because it's all swirling around in my head - but I think about it a lot and I know the time is coming near when I can write it down, it's so important that I don't want to be frivolous about it.*

The trip has been a good experience for me - for the most part I have had to be in control - i.e. navigating the streets of Mexico city, the metro etc. dealing with Nikk's homesickness in other words - displaying no weakness but only strength

and this has been very good for me - it has shown me I have strength lots of it + also shown me different ways of dealing with feelings of weakness.

You are with me all the time + my desire to be with you stay with you thru everything thrown in our path gets stronger every minute.

I'm also very horny when I think of you, that beautiful cock + strong handsome body +

Impassive gorgeous face - you are so handsome + such an incredible person, I like you  
I love you

Love, many kisses +  
many beautiful fucks  
to come

Jennifer

A few days after receiving this letter, I got a call from Jennifer in Mexico City. She told me that she had given up a hard, resistant part of herself. She repeated again and again that she loved me.

In my diary I made a brief note:

*'And I found that I was loved ... and a mighty weight lifted and the hurt softened and I looked at my eyes and saw love and caring and trust ... and the whole world came to a halt and there was complete surrender and selflessness and wonderful bewildered joy ... and I went out into a warm evening sun glowing and radiating this wonderful energy ... and I knew everyone could see it ... and time stood still ... and nothing could harm me ... and never could I be lonely ... and I was left overjoyed to surrender to my love.'*



## 27.

### Edinburgh 1978:

I had been in Edinburgh for a few days. My mother was not in a good mental state. She was convinced that things were disappearing from the flat and on more than one occasion had told me that she thought my niece Shuna was to blame (Shuna, who was now around 12 or 13 years old had been staying at the flat for about a week). "She is a travesty of nature like her father, like Adelaide, like William ... it's all in the genes. I gave her £5 to see a film and she didn't give me any change. Afterwards I was so depressed. I entered the expenditure in my accounting book and made a note 'loss of trust' beside it. I'm still depressed and it's not just because of that. Now you are and Jennifer are moving to Vancouver, still further away from your home here. I have failed as a mother because all my children have deserted me."

It was almost exactly one year since my father had died. My brother and I were in the living room at 96 Spottiswoode Street. I was sitting in my father's armchair and Robin was in the chair usually occupied by my mother. It was around 2 p.m. and my mother was taking her usual afternoon nap. Robin and I were in the middle of an intense discussion about my father when it happened. We were both emotional as we recalled painful episodes from our childhood.

Suddenly, as Robin was talking, there was a loud noise that appeared to come from the china cabinet against the wall. We were both aware of it. Robin paused for a moment and then continued talking. A few seconds later, the noise repeated itself, even louder than before. It was as if something in the cabinet had fallen over or been dislodged.

Robin stopped talking and we both sat in astonished silence.

"What was that?" I asked as I got up and checked the cabinet. There was no sign that anything had been displaced. "It couldn't have come from upstairs or outside. There was no bang on the floor from the flat upstairs. There was no heavy truck in the street outside. It couldn't have been an earthquake or tremor. Nothing actually fell over in the cabinet."

"No, there's no logical explanation," said Robin. "However, there was a lot of psychic energy coming from both of us. I'm going to have to earth the electrical charge in the room by willing white light into the space." And with this he left the room and returned a few moments later with a bowl of water.

"Dip your fingers in the bowl," Robin instructed me. I did so and then he proceeded to do the same thing.

The noise did not reoccur and after a few minutes we resumed our discussion.

It was an extraordinary event, one that left me with a strong sense that my father's spirit, 'ghost', or residual energy was still present and had made itself heard in response to our anger and pain. I had not seriously entertained the possibility of an afterlife prior to this event, but in the absence of any rational explanation, I began to wonder.

As to Robin's intervention, as usual with my brother, it was hard to separate fact from fiction. However, despite Robin's predisposition for chicanery, I could not dispute that he had spent most of his life immersing himself in mystical knowledge so it was altogether possible that he had acted in an appropriate way. I knew, for example, that I seemed to get a lot of electrical shocks from touching certain metal objects such as inserting a car key in the door lock. I also knew that there were energy

fields that surrounded people; I had 'seen' that a few years previous at a party in Montreal. I knew that water conducted electricity. And it wasn't a stretch to believe that even though the body had died and had been disposed of, there could be energy that remained. Wasn't that the message of some ghost stories – that an unhappy spirit needed to be seen or heard in order to be released? Isn't that how reincarnation might occur?

Certainly Robin was not a dilettante. Whatever he delved into, he did so in earnest, whether it was Christianity, Islam, the Rosicrucians, Scientology or Aleister Crowley and the occult. He had recently shared in a letter that he had come to the conclusion that his calling was to become an evangelical teacher / preacher.

*Extracts from letter from Robin: 29/6/78*

*"I have finally come to a stage where the opposite sex no longer plays a part in my thoughts ... last year I had a long impromptu session with Ena Twigg, the famous medium and she said that in July this year I would be as reborn and would begin my ministry. She said I had been given a lonely path and would teach and spiritually heal those beings who hide in the shadows of their minds. I visited Swaziland and Kimberly last December and it was whilst I was out in the vast veldt lands of the northern Cape that I began to realize the tremendous need for teachers amongst the ignorant Africans, Indians and Cape coloured races."*

During my stay in Edinburgh, I reflected once again on how our nuclear family was like a military unit with a chain of command in which the higher ranks talked but did not listen. When The Major (Dad) talked, the rest of us listened. Now that he had passed on, the Sergeant-Major (Mum) was in charge and she now held the talking stick. But if she wasn't around, then the next in line, Joy and Robin, took on the role. I was the youngest. I felt I had to shout in order to be heard, or at the very least, I had to repeat myself and be adept at articulating and explaining my point of view.

My mother's monologues were endless. Later in life, when I became the writer-hermit, I observed that when my friend Tony came to visit, I would talk his head off when he first arrived. That gave me the insight that part of my mother's problem was that her isolated life denied her the opportunity to express herself to another. Whatever the case, on every visit to Edinburgh, I found that after a few days, her monologues started driving me crazy, both the frequency of them and the content. For example, if the content was anecdotal, she could be witty, perceptive and amazingly accurate in her recollections of past events. However when the content was an expression of her anxieties or paranoid suspicions, I could only take so much. Much of the time, her message was prescriptive; everything became 'ought' and 'should' and when, very occasionally a 'want' crept in, it was immediately set upon by a hundred warnings about potential pit-falls. Seeing the way my mother 'corrected' Shuna all the time gave me a better insight into why Joy had felt so distant from her.

In transactional analysis terms, she was firmly in her 'parent' (both the nurturing and 'pig parent' kind). As a woman in a male dominated culture, her 'adult' had never had much of a chance to develop and assert itself. Meanwhile her 'child', finally released from bondage, crept into the open fearful and resentful. 'Look what Life has done to me', it whispered. By her own account, she had never had playmates as a child, and my father had been anything but a playmate. Again by her own account, much of the time she had felt awkward, unattractive and inadequate.

One day she described her relationship with my father:

"As I told Jennifer when she visited, your father and I were never kindred spirits. We never laughed. And when he made belittling comments, I didn't know how to stand up to him. I would just dissolve in tears. Margaret and Mollie would never let him get away with it. They would laugh at him

and that would stop him. The frustrations of being with me would send him into temper tantrums. He must have suffered terribly. I always felt inadequate. It started in childhood. When I asked Grandie if I was pretty, she would say, “no darling, you’re my ugly duckling – with eyes like gooseberries baked for a fool.”

She concluded with the moral to her story. “In a partnership, two people have to be kindred spirits if things are going to work. There has to be cut and thrust so that each can parry the other. It’s not about common interests, or even sex ... it’s being kindred spirits that counts.”

It was hard to argue with the wisdom of these remarks and later on, as I reflected on what she’d said, I realized with a shiver that Jennifer and I had never been kindred spirits. Worse, I had gone into temper tantrums at times, just like my father, because instead of being equipped with a rapier and a foil, Jennifer carried a concealed pipe-wrench. But, as usual, my fears were answered at a visceral level: ‘Jennifer and I *can* make it work ... we *will* learn how to be kindred spirits.’

It was not an easy visit. On the positive side, my mother was clearly in the process of establishing a new identity and a new life a year after my father’s death. She had been forced to look at who she was underneath the enveloping cloaks of ‘wife’ and ‘mother’. She continued to be the nurturer in the sense of taking food to my Aunt Doris’s house (like my father, Doris had become completely blind due to glaucoma), and once a week being a driver for the ‘Meals On Wheels’ program. But more and more her identity was built around her artistic activities. Her output of drawings was increasing week by week, as was her technical proficiency. She had three main sources of inspiration for these drawings; (1) scenes from her childhood in Seacroft, (2) scenes of street life in Edinburgh taken from contemporary observations, and (3) word associations connected with the image at hand (these would often be inserted in the picture).

However, on the downside, her mental state was fragile. The paranoid delusions continued. One day, before I returned to Canada, she announced that more money had gone missing. Shuna was no longer with us, having returned to London with Robin a week earlier. Other than my mother, I was the only one in the house. It came as a shock when I realized that my mother was implying that possibly I had been involved in the theft. At the same time, she was saying that she thought I might be a clandestine R.C.M.P. agent and that because of this, I couldn’t let her know what I was doing all the time.

I decided to confront the two issues head on. I told her that I had two questions for her. The first was: “do you believe me when I say that I did not steal your money?” The second was: “do you believe me when I say I do not work for the R.C.M.P. or any other government agency, and never have?” I was shocked at her response which was “I don’t know”. She then went off into a rambling speech about a doctor in Mossel Bay in South Africa who went crazy by staring at a white wall which in turn was somehow connected to everyone keeping her in the dark. Then she talked about her sister Adelaide in ‘The Elms’ (the mental institution in which Adelaide had been sequestered for most of her adult life), and how she and my Uncle Dick had been responsible for having Adelaide committed in her twenties. The direction of her ‘connections’ became clear after she then alluded to my involvement with the Mountain Rescue Unit at Sedbergh.

“I need to be rescued,” she said. “Maybe my children think I’m crazy, and after all, you have the power to have me committed.”

I left Edinburgh realizing that I had to learn how to *not* take to heart my mother’s apparent distrust of me. This was not easy given that I had such a big investment in doing all I could to show my mother that she had no reason to distrust me, that whoever else she might be suspicious about, she could count on my honesty and loyalty. It hurt when she doubted my word. I needed to realize that the ‘voice’ that said these things was from a ‘crazy’ place in her brain – but that didn’t mean that she was crazy,

and as a corollary, it didn't mean that I had inherited whatever craziness she did have. I was beginning to accept that, like my mother, I suffered from depressions and anxiety states. However, I did not have the same kind of paranoid delusions.

\* \* \*

I returned to Montreal at the end of August 1978. At the beginning of September, Jennifer and I packed all our belongings into Mathilda, our Ford Econoline van, said goodbye to friends, and set off across Canada for Vancouver.

Canada, oh Canada, I know thee better – twice across thy plains and mountains have I traveled. I have seen thee from shore to shore. I wish to know thee and learn to appreciate thee for thyself, not in comparison to some far-off land of my past. And British Columbia, far-west jewel, you welcomed me with open arms. You are my chosen home.

I had wanted and needed Jennifer to come with me. 'Wanted' in that I had to give our relationship one last chance and in a set of circumstances that *we* had chosen, and for which we collectively had taken responsibility. We had made the opportunity to act together – to do something on a grand scale, pull up roots together, migrate 3000 kilometers and build a home together.

The most significant fact about the two or three weeks that we spent in our van was that we proved that we could be together in close quarters, share closely, make joint decisions, without any real friction. More than this, without any great effort, several of the 'big' problems that we had spent many hours analyzing in the past, started to iron themselves out of their own accord. We might never be kindred spirits but we seemed to be finding ways to be intimate with each other. Much of this came from a giddy sense of release – release from the linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic confines of Quebec. Montreal had so engulfed me and I'd had so many problems in the 6 years I'd been there, that I had lost all sense of perspective. I could no longer tell whether it was 'me', or my circumstances that were at the root of my problems.

We arrived in Vancouver the day before Martin left for Eugene, Oregon to commence his Masters in 'Community Economic Development'. My best male friend in Canada, and my sole contact on the west coast was leaving just as I arrived. It was unfortunate but at least he would still be in the same time zone and reachable. We had a brief meeting at which I asked Martin if he could recommend anywhere to live close to Vancouver because both Jennifer and I were reluctant to start from scratch once again in a big, impersonal, and unknown city. Martin said that there were two places he had always fancied – these being Deep Cove to the north and White Rock to the south. The fact that we finished up in White Rock was mainly due to the fact that our van was facing south – we decided to 'go with the flow'.

Shortly after we took the 'White Rock' exit off Highway 99 from Vancouver later that same day, we spotted a campground on our left with a sign that said 'Timberlands Campground'. We pulled in, paid for a site, made a meal and spent the night there. In the end, we finished up spending a whole week at this campground. The following day we explored White Rock and were captivated by everything we saw. It really did seem that we had stumbled into Paradise. White Rock – a small town on the Pacific ocean, with a beach front, all the facilities we might need, an abundance of trees and flowers, and a magnificent snow-capped mountain on the horizon.

Things continued to unfold in an extraordinary way. After a few days, we started perusing rental ads in the local paper. The first three or four numbers we called, we were told that the accommodations had already been rented. But then we got lucky. We were told about a 2 bedroom house on a street called Columbia overlooking the ocean. We jumped into Mathilda and drove off immediately. When we

found the address, there was already a car parked outside. Somebody had beaten us to it. It was a guy about our age. When he saw our license plates he asked us if we were from Quebec. We told him our story, at the end of which he said, “well, your need is greater than mine, if you want the place, it’s yours.”

Did we want the place?! A perfectly sized detached cottage with floors and roof in good condition, all appliances, a front and back yard, its own parking space and a million dollar view. We thanked him profusely, called the landlord, met him, paid the first month’s rent and moved in that same day. The photos below speak for themselves. We were euphoric.



A few days later, we drove down to Seattle to pick up Krista from the airport – she had been spending the latter part of the summer vacation with her father, Ted, in Louisiana.

For a while, things continued to go our way. Jennifer started getting U.I. payments and I, contrary to all dire warnings about the poor economic situation in B.C., managed to get a job within weeks. How it happened was just another miracle of life in Lotus Land. One day I went to the local community information center and picked up a booklet on White Rock. It was a slim volume and when I looked up the section on ‘Adult Education’, I discovered a single name – ‘Don McKinnon, Director of Adult Education for Surrey’. After years of dealing with the labyrinthine educational bureaucracies of Montreal (and London before that), this was too much. Buoyed by weeks of unfettered freedom, I decided to give the boss a call. Ten minutes later, after a stimulating discussion, Dr. McKinnon told me that I sounded “interesting” and proposed that we meet for lunch a week later. “It’s the beginning of the school year and I’m swamped at the moment. Call me next week and we’ll arrange a time to meet.” It was just all too easy and after my feet landed on solid ground again, I felt a wave of big-city cynicism sweep over me. ‘Yeah sure,’ I thought to myself, ‘that was just a nice way to fob me off ... next time, I probably won’t get past your secretary.’

A week later I called back as suggested.

“Yes, hello Ian, glad you called back. Can you meet me tomorrow for lunch at noon?”

My cynicism vanished in a puff of smoke.

The next day, we met in a restaurant in nearby Cloverdale. Dr. Don McKinnon turned out to be a charming man. We had a great discussion about many aspects of education at the end of which he said “I think I may have a job for you, not perhaps exactly what you are looking for but a good way for you to get your foot in the door.”

One week later, I started my new job as a Program Supervisor with the Surrey Continuing Education office in Cloverdale. It was mid September and the B.C. Fall weather was glorious.

For the first month, I set off every morning with a spring in my step. Everything seemed magical. From the sparkling waters of White Rock Bay, to the active volcano Mount Baker (a Fujiyama look-alike), to the mist-enshrouded flatlands between White Rock and Cloverdale – I felt as if I was in a dream. The nightmarish aspects of some of my Montreal experiences were receding into the background and I was floating through some other dimension.

Then the rains came. I had been told that it rained a lot in B.C. but the daily unremitting deluge of late October and November was only the prelude to my dreams being washed away. The rain changed one's perspective – literally. No longer could we see the horizon. The blue sparkling waters of the bay had been replaced by a sullen gray expanse of sea that merged seamlessly into a sullen gray expanse of sky. The front yard turned muddy from the rain and the nearest shops seemed to retreat and become ever more inaccessible.

My job became tedious. I wasn't teaching. I was a kind of administrator with a multifarious job description that included everything from delivering supplies to programs in different locations in and around Cloverdale, to conducting instructor evaluations. I was a message boy and the Lord High Executioner rolled into one. Once a month there was a meeting of all coordinators and supervisors. The community education coordinators were the head administrators in the six or so regions that comprised the sprawling township of Surrey. They were the ones that had the power. And I discovered that several of them were American expatriates who saw themselves as political radicals. I don't think Don McKinnon saw himself as a political radical but he was certainly a liberal innovator. After a while, I could see that he was grooming me for a position as a coordinator.

But I was becoming impatient. The things that I wanted to be happening weren't happening. I wanted to be a father but there were no signs of Jennifer becoming pregnant. I wanted to be a teacher but I had landed up as an administrator. I wanted to continue with my writing and music projects but had no time or energy left at the end of my working day. And I wanted my relationship with Jennifer to work, and after a wonderful rebirth of intimacy and hope, things seemed to be sliding back into discord.

I was also impatient because I wasn't making any progress with my music or writing. I wanted to complete my play 'The Interview' (that I had started 10 years earlier). I had read about a contest named the Canadian Playwriting Competition and had decided that the deadline of April 1979 was a good incentive to get me to complete the play. I needed to write and to teach. With the U.I. for which I was now once again eligible, I could support several months of writing, and as for teaching, I decided to be narrowly focused and to pursue my Freirian interest in adult illiteracy by applying to be a volunteer in the local A.B.E. (Adult Basic Education) program.

I also found that I needed to come to terms with my recent past. In February, 1979, I wrote a long letter to my sister. It included a retrospective account of our relationship in Montreal. The fact was that despite whatever distance had grown between us, I needed Joy's involvement with respect to how to best take responsibility for our mother. I saw this letter as an attempt to clear the stage for a possible summer visit from my mother, and perhaps also Joy herself.

It was around this time that I got a call from the White Rock Community School Coordinator – someone called Candy Seaman. I had already met Candy at one of Don McKinnon's meetings when I was working in Cloverdale. I had told her that I was looking for work in A.B.E. (Adult Basic Education). On the phone, Candy explained to me that she didn't have anything to offer in the area of A.B.E. but she had heard from her E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) instructor, someone by the name of Joan Robertson. Apparently, there had been a very large enrollment in the E.S.L. class and there was a need for a volunteer to help out. I got in touch with Ms. Robertson and she invited me over to her attic apartment on Victoria Avenue. When she discovered that I was a trained teacher, she immediately said, "there are about 30 students – you can take half of them, the upper level."

My first impressions of Joan Robertson were good. We seemed to have lots in common. She was clearly a committed teacher who, amongst other things knew about Paulo Freire. She had spent 2-4 years in Malaysia as part of the C.U.S.O. program. Like me, she had a middle-class background, one which in her own way she had rebelled against. On top of this, she was a musician and played flute.

Meanwhile, I finished the play and sent it off to Ottawa for the adjudication process.

'The Interview' was, in retrospect, an attempt to come to terms with paternal authority figures. The play was set in purgatory. The action begins as a new arrival 'Josh' (me) is greeted by Saint Peter. Peter is a benign father figure, based on the likes of Hamish Blair-Cunynghame, Jim Moore, John Cassidy, and other kind, empathetic men that I had encountered. He wants the best for Josh. He recognizes that, despite taking a bumpy path in his earthly life – one that he had exited of his own volition – Josh is not a 'bad' person, just confused and misunderstood. Peter wants to befriend Josh and to help him in any way so he can get the green light to enter the pearly gates. He represents healing and spiritual regeneration.

However, the decision as to whether Josh will proceed upwards or downwards is not Peter's alone. His co-worker is Saint Michael, former archangel and one very tough dude. Michael's character is a composite of all the heavy, judgmental, male authority figures I had known in my life – and there had been lots of them. The ones that stood out and influenced how I characterized Michael, were my father, my Uncle Michael Argyle (the 'hanging judge' of the OZ trial fame), and the diabolical psychiatrist in the movie 'The Ruling Class'.

Peter explains to Josh, who by this time is beginning to like and trust Peter, that Michael has been away on a trip to the lower realms and will soon be returning. Before long Michael makes his entrance. He immediately takes charge of the situation. He disparages Peter's 'soft' approach and sets about doing things 'by the book' – literally. When he consults 'The Book', he shows shock and outrage at some of the 'sins' that Josh has committed. High on the list is the fact that Josh did not obey his Father's will and flagrantly took matters into his own hands. Although Peter is supposed to have an equal say in Josh's assessment at the end of 'The Interview', in reality Michael runs the show. The play ends with Michael giving Josh a thumbs-down and saying that he has just been given a one-way ticket to Hell. Peter pleads with him but to no avail.

Here is the ending of the play. The scene was drawn directly from the interview experience I had had in St. Johns, Newfoundland, with the ministers from the school board:

MICHAEL: Well, let us delay no more. We have a job to do. *(he turns to JOSH)* Do you confess to your sins?

JOSH: *(stunned by PETER'S weakness)* I'm not guilty. I've done my penance. I've paid my dues.

MICHAEL: You may think so, you may think so. Well *(rising from his chair)* if you won't confess to your particular sins, how about a General Confession. The Anglican one should suit you. *(MICHAEL goes over to the lectern.)* Repeat after me: 'Almighty and most merciful Father. We have erred and strayed like lost sheep. We ...' *(he realizes that JOSH is going to remain silent) ... so you will not confess?*  
*(JOSH shakes his head)*

PETER: Michael, our job is to help ... to understand ... to

MICHEL: Our job is to evaluate! Our job is to have standards of right and wrong. Quality control, you might say. Our job is not to help. We are not 'do-gooders'. He could have helped himself down there. And he could have helped himself now by confessing. He has chosen not to.

PETER: *(overwhelmed by MICHAEL'S authority and ability to make his case)*  
 I don't know. I ... I suppose you're right.  
*(There are several moments of silence. JOSH looks fixedly at PETER. JOSH's expression and posture suggest that he is shattered)*  
 JOSH: *(To PETER)* For a moment, I trusted you. I thought you might understand. But it's not your fault.

PETER: *(gathering poise)* I'm sorry Josh ... I tried. But he's right! We have a job to do.

JOSH: *(smiling, musing to himself)* It was all a game, wasn't it? Just a game.  
*(for a second, PETER looks anguished. He rises to go over to JOSH but sits down again when MICHAEL restrains him. Suddenly the phone rings, and MICHAEL goes over to answer it)*

PETER: Josh ... Josh, how do you feel?  
*(JOSH appears not to hear this, steps off the well-top, and sits down, cross-legged on the ground, his back against the well wall. His expression is blank. He stares vacantly)*

MICHAEL: *(Coming back towards PETER, looking sprightly)* Come on, we have to go. They just phoned to remind us about the banquet tonight. Don't you remember? It is in honor of Leonardo ... it is his six hundredth birthday.

PETER: But ... what about him? *(He points to JOSH)*

MICHAEL: Oh, he seems happy enough. We can deal with him later. *(picks up the jar of olives.)*  
 Feel like an hors d'oeuvres? *(offers the jar to PETER who declines)*  
*(MICHAEL takes an olive out, pops it in his mouth, and then opening one half of the well-top, spits the pip into the well. He turns back to PETER, forgetting to close the well-top. Wailing sounds are, once again, heard)*  
 By the way, is it you or us that has the meeting tonight?

PETER: I don't know. When the Saints met last ...

MICHAEL: *(MICHAEL starts clicking his fingers, moving his body in a rather uncoordinated fashion, and singing)* 'Oh when the Saints, oh when the Saints, oh when the Saints go marching in, oh Lord I want to be in that number, when the Saints go marching in. Ha ha *(positively jovial now)* ... come on Peter, what's the matter with you? *(he beckons PETER to join in the singing but PETER declines, his mood troubled)* I'm taking a page from your book, eh? Now don't tell me you're upset by this whole thing. The trouble is that you take things to heart. Anyway, it's all over now. He won't cause any more trouble up here. Boy, we're going to have to toughen you up, I can see that ... in preparation for the days ahead. *(he looks over at JOSH)* At least he agreed with me that it's bedlam down there. Yes, we're going to have to streamline our interviewing methods. You know, do ten at a time or something like that. Anyway, I'm tired and hungry. You must be too. Come on, let's go. *(he starts singing again)* 'Oh when the earth has turned to fire, oh when the earth has turned to fire, oh Lord I want to be in that number, oh when the earth has turned to fire'.  
*(PETER does not sing but follows MICHAEL. They exit stage RIGHT. A few seconds later, PETER returns, picks up Lucy the teddy bear, and kneels down beside JOSH)*



PETER: Now you just stay there. Here, if you're hungry, you just feel free to help yourself to some olives. There's no arguing with Michael. He's impossible really. Anyway ... I just want you to know that I'll be back a bit late ... just in case you were wondering ... and er ... Josh, I brought you Lucy to keep you company. *(offers bear to JOSH; no response so he puts it beside JOSH with back to well-wall)* Josh, will you not speak to me?  
*(PETER waits for a few moments. JOSH does not respond in any way. PETER rises, hesitates, and then exits stage RIGHT. For a few moments there is silence. JOSH is motionless and expressionless. Then suddenly his face contorts and he gives an awful cry)*

JOSH: I want to see my Father! I WANT TO SEE MY FATHER!

*(STAGE LIGHTS ABRUPTLY OUT, WAILING SOUNDS OFF STAGE. Darkness for 10 seconds. House lights up, and a recorded dixieland version of 'When The Saints Go Marching In' starts loudly on the PA)*

In early summer I heard from them. To my surprise, I was told that my play had been awarded 'ranking status', meaning that although it hadn't won, it had been chosen as one of the six best plays and a copy of the play would be placed in the national archives. Finally, some feedback that I had at least some talent as a writer.

The final act in my steadily deteriorating relationship with Jennifer came in July when my mother made her first visit to Canada. She stayed for over two weeks with Jennifer, Krista and I in our house on Columbia. At first things were wonderful. As I had expected, my mother immediately fell in love with White Rock – with its gently arcing bay, its quiet lanes and its lush foliage. She was 'home' again, back at Seacroft, back in Lincolnshire or Cheshire or Mossel Bay, or Gullane. The fact that it was B.C., or Canada, or 6000 miles from Britain was irrelevant. It was the sky, the sea, the beach, the small community and friendly faces that constituted a home.

Within days, she wanted to buy a house here. I had suggested the idea but when I responded to her enthusiasm by saying, "Mum, let's not be too hasty here", she flew into a terrible state and screamed at me that I was 'pushing her away' ... that I was rejecting her and giving her "the bum's rush".

Things were no longer so rosy. My mother was getting upset about Jennifer's role as 'a working mother'. Jennifer had started a job a few months earlier as a social worker in Richmond. She had to leave early in the morning and often wasn't back until around 6 o'clock. After school, Krista would return and I was be the official child-minder. It was impossible to disguise the tension between Jennifer and I and eventually I had to tell my mother that we had talked of splitting up.

But the real fun started when Joy arrived on the 13<sup>th</sup>. July. For a one-week visit. Naturally enough, Joy had wanted to stay out of trouble, but something happened that pulled all of us into a terrible confrontation. I had been worn down by Mum's endless critical onslaught against me, against Jennifer, against Krista. In the middle of yet another bout, I found a hair in the salad Mum had prepared for me. This was not the first time, but I hadn't mentioned it previously. However this time, I felt combative. I made some allusion to the effect that if I could discretely remove her hairs from my salad, why did she have to 'split hairs' all the time over trivialities. I should have remained discrete and held my tongue. My mother said she was shocked and that she didn't believe me. This in turn triggered my feelings about my mother's lack of trust.

Later that day, while shopping for vegetables, I lost my wallet. My anxiety was bouncing off my mother's anxiety, and gradually the tension rose to unbearable heights. By the next day, I felt so upset that I didn't want to come down from my makeshift sleeping quarters in the attic (Jennifer and Krista were sharing one bedroom, my mother had the other, and Joy was sleeping on the Chesterfield in the living room). Eventually all hell broke loose. My mother said I shouldn't have got so upset and that I

was the one who was “fit for Craighouse”. This was too much, even for Jennifer and Joy. Jennifer got really upset and defended me and then Joy joined in the fray, half-attacking Mum and half-attacking me. I was then ‘summonsed’ from my retreat. I confronted my mother with the irony of not being trusted when I had tried so hard to be honest and trustworthy. My mother would not be pacified. She said things like, “Jennifer is working out resentment against you by going out to work” ... “Jennifer feels insecure and must forage for herself” ...

A few days later, there was another huge argument over dinner at ‘The Copper Kettle’ in Cloverdale. The subject this time was the ‘sin’ of wasting money (i.e. by having a meal at a restaurant). I started feeling that I was tired of supporting my mother and receiving abuse in return. Two days later on July 19<sup>th</sup>, the day that Joy escaped back to Montreal, my mother was at it again, saying that Jennifer and I had reversed roles, that Jennifer was the breadwinner and I was the house-wife. Somehow, we got through one more week, and on July 26<sup>th</sup>, I saw my mother off at Vancouver Airport.

## 28.

Jennifer and I split up in August. She moved out and into a place on Marine Drive. Rationally, I could accept what had happened. We had given our relationship one last chance. It hadn't worked out. That was that – end of story. Except that when a child is involved, it is never quite that simple, as I was to find out.

But of course it wasn't that simple quite apart from matters concerning Krista. Emotionally, I was all at sea. I hadn't even resolved the baggage from previous relationships and now the baggage had gained considerable weight.

I reacted to the upheaval in different ways. I wrote a long letter to Ya-el. I was overwhelmed by a sense that I had betrayed my heart-felt attraction to Ya-el, both in my decision to move in with Jennifer in my last year in Montreal and then the subsequent decision to come out to B.C. together.

### Extracts from Letter to Ya-el: 14/8/79

*“My remorse results from following my will, or my conscience, or my intellect, or my security needs, rather than my heart – the centre of emotional want, and emotional truth. Of course I can rationalize this betrayal. I have done so in the past, and I am sure I will do so in the future. To rationalize seems to be the intellect's way of trying to protect the heart from further wounds, but the fallacy is that perhaps only the heart can heal itself. by denying oneself the strongest and purest one one's positive emotions, the old wounds linger on and the heart shrivels and hardens in response to neglect.*

*Let me turn back the dusty pages of time to that wonderful and enchanted evening somewhere under the Rainbow. Man trying to make music in an inferno of noise, smoke and heat ... when suddenly intense eyes bring rainbow hues and union under the stars. Dear Yael, those memories are so sweet, so dear to me, so deep in my heart ...*

*Big brown-eyed, scotch-boozing, snowball-pitching Ya-el. You who provided immediate chemistry, sparked off immediate humor, evoked and invoked immediate warmth in my heart, provoked challenge for my intellect, and consistently stimulated physical desire ... I wanted you Ya-el, I wanted you in so many ways. And yet I was afraid – I was afraid of needing you. I was desperately afraid that if things went deeper than an affair, you would reject me as you saw the full extent of all the hurt and anger within me.*

*I was so clear I wanted you. I didn't want Jennifer, at least not the Jennifer that I had known. I did, however, feel that I wanted and needed 'the relationship' in the sense of a human contact that remains continuous and unbroken. I was fearful beyond words of being the agent of rejection or of being the object of rejection. I also had (and probably will always have) a stubborn belief that any problem can be beaten. However I allowed that belief to become a trap in the case of Jennifer. I have not learned how and when to let go. You were planning to go to Toronto and I was not able to make a commitment to a total relationship. You were unequivocal about wanting me and I was ambivalent. My pride usually prevents me from thinking I have made mistakes, but my heart tells me that in this hesitation I may have made a big mistake. Something that for me was big and beautiful and exciting got nipped in the bud and I have only myself to blame.”*

I wasn't trying to win her back. I knew she had settled down with her partner Alan. I just needed to start working out some of the pain. And clearly one letter wasn't going to achieve that. There was over ten years of hard living to deal with.

One day in August, a few days before Jennifer moved out, I visited the Women's Centre. While I was there, I saw an ad. On the notice board that read:

*Radix: Bioenergetic Therapy  
Call Ellen Sainsbury*

The phone number was in North Vancouver. I had become acquainted with Bioenergetics during a workshop in Edinburgh prior to my father's death in 1976. I knew how powerful and effective it could be, especially in the area of emotional release. I made a note of the phone number but didn't give it much more thought due to the location being so far away.

However a month later things changed. In the summer I had realized that I was not earning enough from piano lessons to pay the rent on the house by myself, so I had spent much of August putting in applications for A.B.E. (Adult Basic Education) and E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) jobs. Out of over twenty applications, I had got two interviews. One was for teaching E.S.L. at Fraser Valley College. The other was for teaching A.B.E. at Capilano College in North Vancouver. To my amazement, I was offered both jobs. Because I was set on following up on my interest in Freire and adult illiteracy, I chose to accept the North Vancouver job, despite the logistics of getting there and back.

Then I remembered the information I had written down about the Bioenergetics person. Now, perhaps, it did make sense. Already, the fact that I hadn't seen Krista since Jennifer moved out was beginning to stir up intense feelings of bitterness and rage. I was experiencing some of these feelings as psychosomatic symptoms such as constriction in the throat (the 'all choked up' sensation I'd had in Montreal), a dull ache in the centre of my chest, and shortness of breath.

I called up and spoke to Ellen Sainsbury. To my relief she sounded 'normal' – meaning that she didn't sound like a Susan Brownmiller 'all men are rapists' clone. She had an Australian accent and sounded warm and grounded. I set up a first appointment.

Ellen's house was high up on the mountain slopes overlooking Burrard Inlet. Her therapy space was in a sound-proofed, padded basement. After the first session, Ellen told me that she wanted me to write an 'Autobiography of Feeling'. I found this to be a very meaningful exercise and ended up by writing eight pages. The topics included the significant emotions that I had experienced with my mother, father, brother, sister, as well as partners and friends. I also had to talk about my self-perception in the area of how I handled different emotions.

*Extract from 'Autobiography of Feeling'*

*How I Feel About Myself:*

*I feel good about myself to the extent that I know I have been guided by certain 'absolutes', such as truth, honesty and justice, and that I feel I have followed these values as best I could. I feel bad about myself in that I am presently burned out, unhappy, and unfulfilled. Also, I feel bad about the changes that have occurred within me. I have changed from being open, vulnerable, humble, accepting, to being closed, defensive, arrogant and critical.*

*I have always found it hard to assert my needs. The needs of others have always taken precedence. When I have expressed sexual, emotional and psychological need I*

*have tended to get the response that I was 'too powerful', 'too demanding', 'too heavy'. This in turn has made me all the more reluctant to ask favours.*

*I find it hard to distinguish between when life is going well and when it is going badly. I think the reason for this is that things were so bad in the past that I lost all perspective. In order to keep going, I had to somehow rationalize that things weren't that bad. I think one of my best qualities - a healthy desire and ability to be a problem-solver may have become something that is almost neurotic, namely an obsession to solve each and every problem I came across or even seek out others' problems.*

*I recognize that I have both positive and negative traits. Whether or not I accept the negative traits is dubious. Because of my perfectionist/idealist personality, it is hard for me to accept anything – it can always be better, improved, re-formed. I think I may have gone full circle. I certainly never used to accept negative aspects of myself, myself (say at the age of 20). Then around the age of 23-25, I was in a stage of accepting, let's say, anger within me, and refusing to feel guilty or bad for it. It was there for a reason, and it was there to be used. Now it seems that much of that anger has been replaced by pain. The rationale for doing Radix is not so much that I want to change 'negative' aspects as it is a desire to release some of the pain. I would be distrustful of a process that rid me of all my anger.*

In the course of writing this 'Autobiography of Feeling', I came across a picture that cut like a knife straight through to the core of my painful feelings:



The rage at my father had gone. I hadn't yet forgiven him but in my need to feel some love between us, I was getting in touch with how I felt neglected or even abandoned by him.

As always, there was a difference between 'feeling' and 'seeing'. How I felt about myself was one thing; how I saw myself was another. I had come across a book called The Crystal Spirit – A Critical Study of George Orwell by George Woodcock. Because of my high regard for Orwell and my growing interest in Woodcock, the ex-Brit. Anarchist domiciled in B.C., I bought the book. The following is a quote that clarified aspects of my self-perception.

*"In Orwell's view, individual integrity and even, on occasion, individual caprice, stand above political loyalty, and this fact alone makes one hesitate about regarding him as a politician at all. It is in the nature of the political animal to hunt in packs. **The lone hunter belongs to another race – the race of moralists. The differences between politician and moralist are clear. The first is concerned with acquiring power in order to implement a certain program (which may be merely the consolidation of power), and for him the means are always subordinate to the end. For the moralist, the means are all important; the quality of the act rather than its results is what he has first in mind. Yet the moralist does not go as far as the mystic and declare, like Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita that we should be concerned only with action, never with its fruits. he would say rather that the action and its fruits cannot be divided, that one acts always to an end, but the end will be distorted and the fruit be evil if the action is wrong.**" (my emphasis)*

I was not a politician, and although attracted to mysticism, I was not a mystic. More than anything else, I was – like Orwell – a moralist. I didn't feel very comfortable with this notion, but whether I liked it or not, Woodcock's description seemed to fit, a bit like the well-fitting but itchy collar to a new shirt. I was a lone hunter. That was why I had identified so strongly with Castaneda's books. That was why I had chosen to be a teacher rather than 'a politician' like my former friend, Iain Anderson. At Capilano College, I had to go to Departmental meetings and to some extent be a 'team player' (aka 'pack animal'), but I could still retain my independence in the classroom. There I could act solo, hunting eager minds that wanted to learn. And as ever, underneath the turmoil in my life, was a clear set of values that guided me through the moral terrain of 'right' and 'wrong'.

\* \* \*

One weekend, while walking along Marine Drive, I bumped into two people I knew from Montreal. They were Janet Russell and Jamie Mackay and they had been part of the Yellow Door scene. It was quite a coincidence and served to enhance my sense that I had somehow been guided to this place, White Rock. They invited me over to their place and Janet suggested that we form a band. Although they were both competent musicians, I wasn't very enthusiastic. I didn't really want to repeat the Stephen Barry Band experience of being back-up keyboardist doing cover material. On the other hand, it was an opportunity to gain some kind of social life and have an outlet for my musical abilities. I agreed and before long 'Saturday Alley' was born with Janet on lead vocals, Jamie on guitar or drums, and me on keyboard. We described ourselves as a blues / jazz / swing band.

It was at a party given by Janet that I met Chloe. I was playing the piano at the time and the first I knew of Chloe was the sensation of her hands massaging my shoulders as I played. Chloe was young,

around 23, and looked younger than her age. She was like a flower child from the sixties, open and innocent and full of a bubbling energy. I welcomed her touch and was responsive to her manner. Before long Chloe became a regular visitor to my house. As I got to know her better, I was amazed by her knowledge and experience in both sexual matters and herbal medicine. On the other, I was equally aware of her inexperience in the emotional tango of a relationship. I was open to an affair but felt cautious about anything longer term.

Meanwhile, Joan and I were continuing to see each other although had not yet become physically involved. Sometime in October, Joan invited me to a party at her place on Victoria. She had told me that she had a dancer friend, Suzie Green, who she wanted me to meet. Later, at the party, I was astonished to see an old friend from Queens University walk in the door. This was Joan's friend, except I knew her as Suzie Morris. Suzie had been a friend of Frank Wheeler and a room-mate of Brenda Firestone (my friend and fellow student at L.S.E.), to say nothing of a dance colleague of Lesley. Surely this had to be more than coincidence! Suzie was married to a lawyer named Ross Green, hence the name change. Like Joan, Janet, Jamie, Martin and I, she had moved across the country and landed in White Rock. It was wonderful to see her. Suzie was special and everyone knew it. As for Suzie's reaction, she was equally happy to see me and delighted that Joan and I were friends.

1979 drew to a close, as did the seventies – a decade that I was relieved to see the back of. The world was in turmoil. In Iran, the Shah's regime had been toppled and Islamic fundamentalism had taken over. In November, the U.S. embassy in Teheran was occupied and hostages were held. In December, the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan and 279,000 people escaped from Vietnam in boats. This exodus had a direct impact for me. I was told that, as of January, I would switch from teaching A.B.E. to teaching an E.S.L. class of "boat people". The end of the seventies seemed to mark defeats for liberalism in many arena. Even Trudeau went under – at the hands of Joe Clark.

In December, Joan and I slept together for the first time and the emotional bond between us deepened and strengthened. At Christmas, I went to Montreal and stayed with my sister Joy for a few days, while Joan went to her family home in Toronto. When she came back, she said that she had realized in Toronto that she loved me and was ready to enter a committed relationship. I felt the same way and realized that I would have to withdraw from my affair with Chloe.





## 29.

A.B.E. and E.S.L. were sometimes talked of in the same breath as they both had to do with upgrading English language skills. But in A.B.E. the focus was on reading and writing and study skills, whereas in E.S.L., at the level at which I taught, it was on speaking and listening skills.

An even bigger difference was the type of clientele. In the Fall semester, I had been disillusioned by the absence of Freire's 'oppressed' in the ranks of my A.B.E. students. Most of my class were from middle-income to well-off North Vancouver families. The typical student had had lots of opportunities but had goofed off at school, and were now reluctantly and even resentfully edging their way towards a High School diploma with little sense of purpose or motivation. They were not an inspiring bunch to teach.

The E.S.L. class that I started to teach in January of 1980 could not have been more different. With one exception, the class consisted of Vietnamese 'boat people'. Most of these students had gone through all kind of traumatic experiences and were now extremely grateful to be safe and free in Canada. If they had had money before (and many, I discovered later, had only got out of Vietnam due to bribes and payments made with gold), few appeared to have it now. None of them spoke more than a few words of English, let alone understand anything when spoken to. But they were lovely people, with great spirit and fierce determination to 'get ahead'. For the first time in my teaching career, I had the luxury of a highly motivated class – that is with the possible exception of the one non-Vietnamese student, a Bulgarian sailor who had jumped ship and claimed refugee status. He was a dour fellow called Emile who would enter the classroom every morning and immediately open all the windows. The Vietnamese would start shivering as the cold mountain air flowed in, but would collectively say nothing. At coffee break, when Emile was outside having a smoke, someone would close the windows, only to have them opened again by the extraordinarily insensitive Emile on his return. I ended up mediating the cold war (no pun intended) by tactfully suggesting that Emile only open one window in the back corner of the room, and be the one to sit beside it.

Things were going well in the teaching arena. However, in the dark, gloomy rain-filled days of January, I still felt fragile following the split with Jennifer. Three times a week I drove my van Mathilda on the one hour journey to and from North Vancouver.

One evening, after a day's teaching and a departmental meeting, I was driving back along Highway 1 on the desolate stretch beside Burnaby Lake, when I felt my breathing getting shorter and shallower. My chest constricted and I felt a rising panic as I wondered if I was having a heart attack. All I knew was that I had to get off the Highway and seek help. After what seemed like an age, I saw the exit for Cariboo Road with a sign that said 'R.C.M.P. post'. I managed to get there although I felt like I was about to black out. The police were friendly and immediately called for an ambulance. Two paramedics arrived and, after doing some tests, informed me that I had had a "panic attack". They gave me some kind of tranquilizers and said I would probably be O.K. to drive home in 20-30 minutes. However one of the policemen said that he could give me a ride because he happened to live in White Rock. He said he could see that I was really shaken up and that it was better if I didn't drive.

That was the first time I ever had a panic attack and it was a very scary experience. From then on, for quite a considerable length of time, I felt reverberations of the fear and panic every time I drove that stretch of Highway.

Much of my sense of emotional turmoil was being fuelled by the fact that since Jennifer and I had broken up, I had scarcely seen Krista more than a few times. I had played the role of father to Krista for over six years and I felt enraged and impotent now that Jennifer was discouraging contact between us. Part of this was probably due to the fact that she had entered a new relationship with a man, and part of it was due to the consolidation of Krista's relationship with her natural father Ted.

In any event, it felt all wrong. Krista and I had had a very close bond. Because of this and also the fact that I had taken so much responsibility for child-care in the past, I felt I had a right to see her. I had supported Jennifer's involvement, both in Montreal and in White Rock, in Women's groups and this is how she repaid me? I burned up with anger at the thought. I started actively seeking ways in which I could find or start up a Men's Group.

\* \* \*

In February my life changed radically. On February 21<sup>st</sup>., Chloe informed me that she was pregnant. Two weeks later, on March 6<sup>th</sup>., Joan told me that she too was pregnant. In the case of Joan and I, we were overjoyed. In the case of Chloe, I didn't know what to think at first. I wrestled with the facts and the issues. In the two months that followed the initial news, Chloe began to deliver accusations. The first was that I had "led her on". The second was that I had tried to pressure her to have an abortion. I didn't accept either accusation and in the end I decided I would have to clarify my thoughts in a letter:

Letter to Chloe: 19/4/80

15311 Marine Drive,  
WHITE ROCK, B.C.  
V4B 1C7  
19/4/80

*Dear Chloe,*

*The purpose of sending you the following piece of writing is to try to open some lines of communication between us, to try to establish some basis for respect, trust, understanding and maybe even acceptance. The basic choice seems clear; either we blame and feel anger and bitterness towards each other or we attempt to cooperate as a means to overcome such feelings.*

*My overall attitude regarding this is reflected in a passage from Men's Bodies, Men's Selves that I read out to you in one of our meetings:*

*"At the core of the problem is the attitude which persists in our culture demanding that in each serious situation there must be a winner triumphing over a loser. The result is that men and women involved in an unwanted pregnancy are hampered from working together to make sure that they both emerge as winners - or at least as non-losers.."*

*"From the moment any one of us hears that we are involved in an unwanted pregnancy we have to assert the right to share in the final decision about what to do with that pregnancy. But we must be aware that sharing means just that and not coercing, intimidating or encouraging guilt."*

*I feel that you have tried to 'encourage guilt in me by blaming me for various things. The following are some of my feelings regarding certain accusations that you have made:*

*(1) with respect to the 'leading-on' accusation:*

*From a position of being open to the possibility of having a child together (given the right circumstances and the right kind of relationship) I did not 'lead' you anywhere, unless it was away from such a position, i.e. by saying in January "let's not talk any more about having a child". And this was not even a case of 'leading' or 'leading on', as it was an opinion that you also expressed. Let me put this to you; were you led on by me, or were you rather led on by your own hopes and desires? As you said in one of our meetings, "I care about you a whole lot, it sucks me in every time."*

*As far as the whole "delightful" episode goes, if you feel this was significant as regards being led on, can you please explain the whole thing to me in writing.*

*(2) with respect to the "cold", "inconsiderate", "uncaring" accusations, I do not accept blame for this. I do accept your feelings. I understand your need for support in your pregnancy, and I understand the emotional feelings of rage that must come from the reality that I have not been there for you. I also understand the hurt caused due to my bonding to Joan and her subsequent pregnancy. But if you decided to take responsibility in good faith for having the child, why turn round later and work out this hurt in the form of blame?*

*(3) with respect to the "pressuring me to have an abortion" accusation, I did not pressure you. I did state my opinions and the reasons for them. I was open to, and tried to encourage discussion and exchange of feelings, wants and viewpoints. To use the Men's Bodies, Men's Selves quotation, I neither coerced you, intimidated you, or encouraged guilt. Nor did I manipulate you or others against you. If you disagree with this, please explain to me what you feel I did.*

*I could say that I feel 'pressured by your decision into a situation where I am the father to a child who may discover at some future date that his father didn't want him to be born. It will be hard to know how and where to show the caring and love that I would want to show a child that is biologically 50% mine.*

*Well there is always more that could be said but I want to get this off to you so I'll finish here. I would appreciate your written response to this, including the question that I asked you on the phone, "what would you like / have liked me to do / have done?"*

*I am open to anything you have to say on one condition that you assure me that you have considered and weighed your words so that I know it truly is what you think and feel.*

*I deeply hope that this exchange will lead the way to some renewed contact based, as I said before, on respect rather than blame.*

*I look forward to hearing from you,*

*Ian*

*P.S. I am grateful for what you gave me Chloe. I do care for you, and I want to feel that we can have some kind of friendship.*

I felt that Chloe did have a right to give birth but that if she did it was her choice, and I should not be held financially responsible. I told Chloe that I would assume some kind of responsibility towards the child in later years and would want him / her to know any child or children that Joan and I might have, as well as know me, her biological father. It bothered me that Chloe had taken a 'victim'

role. I neither felt I had used or abused her in any way. What I had done was have a short and sweet affair in between two monogamous relationships. I had never given a green light to conceiving a baby. It bothered me that the father had no rights whatsoever in a situation such as this, i.e. one in which the man and woman disagreed over whether the child should be born or not. And I did not feel guilty for refusing to take financial responsibility for the child. Should I have? It was a messy situation and one in which I could imagine ex-Sedbergh friends saying, as they rolled their eyes, 'only Jock could get himself into a muddle like this!'

I shared all this information, of course, with Joan, and she responded as gracefully as she could under the circumstances.

Gradually I was meeting and getting to know Joan's circle of friends. There was Rose, the wealthy Jewish matriarch, who played harpsichord and was equally as passionate about Early Baroque music as was Joan. Then there was Dorothy, a Brit whose roots were in Chester, and who, like Joan, was compassionate and caring. Joan's closest friend, when I met her, was a woman called Susan Gemmill. Like me, Susan was a musician and a writer. Susan was perceptive, creative and finely tuned. I like her wit and earthiness. She seemed to like me and referred to me as 'The Red Prince'. I think she both welcomed my partnership with Joan and yet felt threatened by it at the same time. She and Joan were closely bonded, but as in most of Joan's relationships, there was an element of emotional dependence on Joan.

I continued to play with 'Saturday Night Alley'. Susan met a guitarist named Garth through Janet and Jamie, and they started rehearsing some of her material as well as entering into a torrid affair. Some time, early in the new year, someone came up with the idea of 'Saturday Night Alley', Susan and Garth, and another local group putting on a concert at the White Rock Playhouse.

The notion became a plan, the plan became a goal, and on March 7<sup>th</sup>., the event happened in front of a sell-out audience. The show was promoted as 'A Night On The Town'. We were also reviewed in the 'White Rock Sun'. On the next page is the poster for the concert.

## Crowd catches infectious cheer

*W.R. Sun March 11, 1980*

By SANDRA MCKENZIE

Remember those old Andy Hardy movies where Mickey Rooney or somebody would always say, "Hey gang, let's put on a show!"

And then just like magic the neighborhood hang-out would be transformed into a sophisticated stage set, a complete orchestra would materialize, and everybody would end up singing and dancing their hearts out.

Well, that "let's put on a show spirit" is alive and thriving in White Rock, thanks to Pier Productions and the White Rock Playhouse. Friday night's production of "A Night on the Town" may have lacked slick choreography or a sophisticated score, but I doubt that anyone missed it. The near capacity crowd at the Playhouse got caught up in the infectious good cheer of the evening right from the start, as they stamped feet, whistled, clapped and hummed along with the music.

And when you're having that much good fun out of an evening's entertainment, how can you criticize individual performances without seeming to be quibbling?

Flaws there were. Vocalist Susan Jains never did get on key, but her racy lady anecdotes and her bluesy, gutsy approach to her material endeared her to the audience. At least half the men walked away a little bit in love with her.

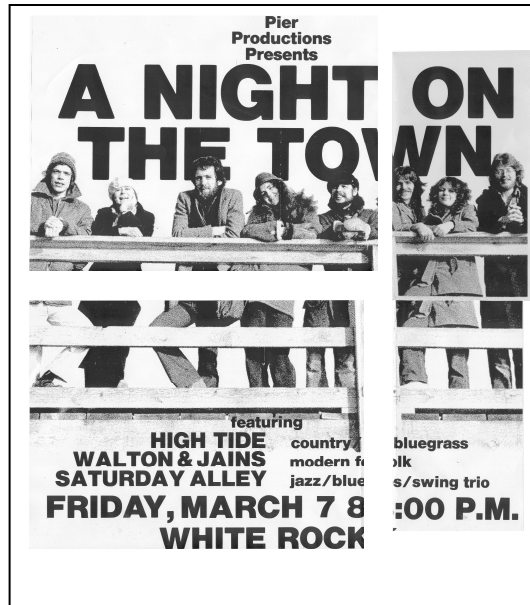
Garth Walton's guitar work underscored her vocals with a lyric subtlety I would like to have heard more of.

High Tide started things off with a raucous, high spirited cover of "Darlin' Cory" that set the mood, and never let us down. All the bluegrass components were there . . . the haunting harmonica piercing through the lyrics of "Under the Stars" an effective group effort at the Playhouse, audience and performers alike was one big family gathering, with the most certifiably talented members being given the opportunity to show off for us all.

**White Rock & Surrey Sun, serving the area for over 40 years.**

The picture below is of 'Saturday Night Alley' playing at Sawbucks Pub in White Rock. I played with Janet & Jamie for about a year.





*Diary Entry: March 1980*

*Joan has the kind of trust that I used to have. Whereas she has introduced me to Rose and Susan and Dorothy, I am very hesitant about introducing her to either Martin or Peter. I still feel threatened by Peter despite the fact that (a) they haven't met, (b) Joan says she loves me, (c) Peter has a partner who is 7 months pregnant. Despite all this, I feel Joan would be bowled over by Peter's combination of flute playing, good looks, and involvement in Music Therapy. My level of trust with both men and women has reached totally irrational proportions ... or has it? Both Peter and Martin have told me that their behavior changes when they are with a woman, meaning they ease into shmooze control.*

*I want to have the opportunity to get to know Peter myself so that we can form a friendship before either Joan or Debbie enter the picture. Many women are increasingly excluding men from their relationships and groups for the same reason, so that they can create bonds in a safe, uncompetitive atmosphere. When I truly have a few male friends that I can trust, I will be ready to share them.*

\* \* \*

The months went by and Joan grew big with child. So did Chloe but we saw less and less of each other.

During the nine months of Joan's pregnancy, we were, for the main part, very happy and very much in love. We went hiking together and I even rediscovered my clown persona for a while. Joan

liked my sense of humor and laughed heartily at escapades such as this:



We sent love notes to each other and bought each other little presents.

*Notes from Joani: April – September 1980*

*July 1980: “you’re so damned good-looking” ... “thank-you for staying with me even though I was withdrawn Monday night” ... I know being with you has, is and will make me a bigger person”*

*August 1980: “the part of your child that I’ve always valued and seen ever since I began to see who you were, is your loving child ... you’ve kept that powerful and incredible ability to love ... you haven’t packaged it away up into Adult doses ... and then I began thinking of all the reasons and times when you could have done that (your father, women you’ve loved, friends who’ve left, politics/ideals that weren’t allowed fulfillment or recognition), and your love is still so shining and strong and open, from your child ... I cherish it more than I can express ...”*

*Sept. '80:*

*“I love you and want to be with you for:*

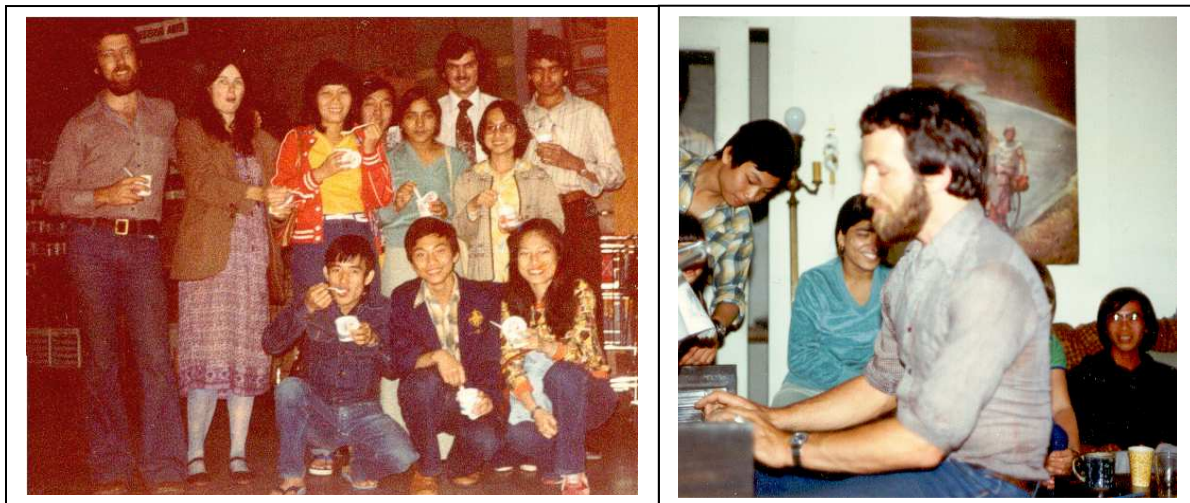
- *your many parts which form a complex and changing pattern which I’m only beginning to see and understand*
- *for your emotional, spiritual, creative, political, intellectual, physical and sexual selves*
- *your commitment to honesty*
- *your deep essential goodness*
- *being father of the child we made together, out of love and belief in each other and desire to have children*
- *your strength and courage*

- *your educational philosophy*
- *your own openness to learning*
- *you inner softness and vulnerabilities*
- *your life experiences*

\* \* \*

In a political move that Joan didn't like, Douglas College took over the Surrey Continuing Education Programs including the White Rock E.S.L. classes. I understood and appreciated why Joan was angry. After all, she had initiated and developed the White Rock program from the ground up. On the other hand, when Douglas College offered both of us the first ever full-time 'Manpower' (Federally funded) E.S.L. class for refugees and new immigrants (including Vietnamese 'boat people'), we were happy to accept. Apart from anything else, the hourly wage from Douglas was significantly more than what we had been receiving before.

Joan and I worked together really well as a teaching team. The students loved our respective teaching styles and genuine concern for their well-being. We invited the whole class to our little beach house on Marine Drive on a couple of occasions.



My closest male friend at this time was Martin. We sent long letters back and forth between White Rock and Eugene, Oregon where he was taking his Masters Degree in Community Economic Development. We would commiserate about our dealings with the opposite sex. In one letter, I shared my anxieties about the seeming fact that Joan was, or seemed so much more 'emotionally together' than I was. Perhaps a more accurate way of putting this is that she had a more robust nervous system than I did.

*Extracts from letter from Martin: 25-8-80*

*"I can't imagine that Joan carries any less 'emotional baggage' than you do. You're just 'too open', he says cynically. People tell me this because I am affected by others, and am more open and vulnerable than many. I set Jina up as being more together than*

*I because she made more friends and got more strokes. It took me a while after the divorce to realize the differences. Her aims are different as well as her visions. She didn't try to deal with many of her feelings. It was seeing her as better than I because she didn't have any concerns, that crippled me."*

Hmm ... that resonated. Joan had also made that point. "See how much you hurt yourself when you make comparisons between us."

And with regard to my suggestions of forming a men's group, Martin had this to say:

*"I wouldn't look to a men's group yet. The expectations on such a group would loom large. Your emotional armor isn't too thick right now, and I've heard too many stories of martyrdom, sexism, and scapegoating that my faith is not too high that male needs can be met through that structure, yet."*

*"I am so very thankful and needy about you as a friend. It blew me away how easily the understanding flows between you and at times. In less than a minute I felt you knew where I was at better than anyone I know here."*

*"There are a few people who want to meet you. You are slightly larger than life as I tend to idolize you in absentia."*

In June or July, Joan's mother Helen came to visit. Joan had told me a little about her family. Her father had died in the same year as mine, 1976. He had been a physician, well-liked by everyone for his gentle manner and folksy wit. Joan's older sister, Mary, had had meningitis as a child and perhaps as a result (or perhaps not), she had done a lot of aggressive acting out. However, she had become a doctor and had been practicing in Vancouver for many years. Joan was closest to the eldest of the three sisters, Ruth who at that time was still working as a librarian in Toronto. Ruth had been the rebel in the family and had embraced leftist politics in her twenties. She had also done a fair bit of therapy. I had yet to meet her, but she had promised to come out to White Rock after the baby was born.

Helen immediately struck me as upper-crust, old-stock Canadian – which, given that her lineage included Chief Justices and the like, she was. She was a society lady, belonged to the Rosedale Golf Club and attended concerts, plays and a book club. Helen and I got off to a good start. Like everyone else, Helen clearly approved of Joan and I as a couple. Whatever fights we were having were still behind the scenes, and in public we appeared as a charming, loving and essentially compatible couple. I was able to tap into my Sedbergh boy persona and play golf with Helen and display the grace and etiquette expected from an upper-middle class graduate. But because of Helen's broad intellectual tastes, I was also able to discuss writers and a wide range of ideas and issues. Helen was a Liberal and wanted to be seen as progressive.

The three of us seemed to blend well. We made a trip to Tofino on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Helen bought us meals, we walked on Long Beach, and I remember laughter and good conversation more than any friction.

Joan had made a passing comment to me before her mother's visit about how she was anxious about me meeting her "crazy family". After this first encounter with Helen, all I could think was 'you think your family is crazy – wait 'til you meet mine'.

Joan and I jointly decided to quit the Douglas E.S.L. class at the end of July on the grounds of maternity / paternity leave. We decided on two major activities prior to becoming parents in November. The first was for Joan and I to do a grand tour of B.C. The intended itinerary was for us drive up Highway 5 from Kamloops to Tête Jaune Cache, then East over the Yellowhead Pass to Jasper, do some hiking in the mountains between Jasper and Banff, then back eastwards along the Yellowhead until we got to McBride, where we would spend a couple of days with two old friends of Joan's. Then, off again north-



west to Prince George and all the way north to Fort. St. John. And then all the way back again.

The second activity was for me alone. I decided that I wanted to do the Outward Bound Course in Keremeos. I think the motive was to give one final affirmation to my Sedbergh boy past before passing into realms unknown.

Our E.S.L. class was most upset that we were abandoning them and were to be replaced by two unknown teachers. We assured them that we wanted them to keep in touch and to come and see the baby after it was born. The day came, we had a big party, and then it was *sayonara* to Douglas (which was itself giving birth at that time to the newly named Kwantlen College).

It was early August when we set off – just Joan and I, a tent, sleeping bags, a ‘foamy’, my little Bluet butane stoves, cooking equipment, clothing and food.

It was while hiking in the Rocky mountains that I saw just how resolute and tough my Joani was. We had planned to do a longish hike, but due to overdoing it on the outward hike, we ended up by walking over 15 kilometres. I felt a combination of concern and pride as Joan, 6 months pregnant, plodded on with strength of body and spirit and a kind of shining good-naturedness.

The couple that lived near McBride were named Tonio and Nancy. They were long-time friends of Rose and Joan - two sixties ex-hippies of the same age as Joan and I, who had bought land in the remote bush of the Robson Valley. Over the years they had cleared the land, learned the practical skills they needed to learn, and survived in true pioneer fashion while raising two young kids. They had our respect – they certainly did. The highlight of our stay there was the McBride Community Ice-Cream Social. What a wonderful idea! What better motive to provide people to get together on a hot summer’s day than oodles of ice-cream. Brilliant!

We then made the long drive north to Fort St. John. It was a Friday night when we pitched out tent in a campground just outside the town.

We decided to go into town and have a few beers in a bar. The bar scene was wild. I felt like I was in a saloon in the Wild West. Everything seemed to be exaggerated. The arguments were on the edge of being backed up with fists. Money was flying around, beer was flowing. The place was a rootin’ tootin’ swirl of stetsons, blue jeans and cowboy boots. There weren’t many women around but those we saw were under siege. We were in oil fields territory. The place attracted tough migrants and rewarded them with big money. And it *was* Friday night. After a while we decided to get back to the peace and quiet of our campground. It was on the way back that Joan showed her mettle again. As I was the one who had had the few beers, Joan was driving.

As we made our way up the two-lane highway in the dark, suddenly we saw a pick-up truck come off the left side of the road in front of us, accelerate onto the wrong side of the road, and roar towards us at high speed. Just in time, Joan wrenched the wheel to the left (she couldn’t have gone to the right because there was a deep ditch). Right until the very last moment, it looked as if we were about to be hit by the speeding truck – head on. I saw my life flash by. But thanks to Joan’s quick reflexes, the truck ended up clipping the right back fender and we were spun around. It took a few moments to realize that we were O.K. Meanwhile the truck had kept going. Later we were told by the R.C.M.P. that the truck had been found in a ditch further down the road. The driver and his mate, needless to say, were way over the legal limit for alcohol. Joani’s quick reactions had saved us – and the baby. Here’s the indomitable Joan, the damaged Beetle and the Peace River in the background:



We got back safely and a few weeks later I was off again to do the one week Outward Bound Program in Keremeos.

A guideline in dramatic writing is to avoid packing too many crises together, otherwise there is a danger of the drama becoming too melodramatic. That having said, it is a fact to state that in the space of 4 weeks in August-September of 1980, I had 3 near-death experiences. The first was the accident mentioned above. The second also involved Joan, I and the red Beetle. On the way back from Fort St. John, while I was driving, the car hit an oil slick and for some extremely scary moments, the car lost all traction. The third was at Keremeos while kayaking on the Similkameen River. We were practicing 'eskimo rolls'. The instruction had been brief and I wasn't completely sure of what to do. When I flipped the kayak, I found myself disoriented in an upside-down position in the icy cold water. I fumbled to find the 'skirt' zipper but couldn't locate it. Then I began to panic. After what seemed like a long time, I finally managed to get the damned thing open and escape to the surface. As I gasped for air, I became aware of the instructor making his way towards me.

"How long was I under?" I asked him when I got my breath back.

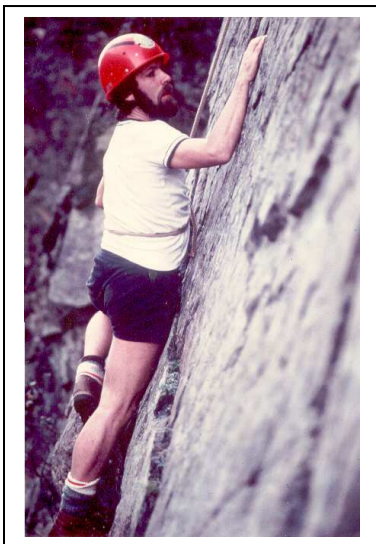
"Too long," he said.

"Well, how much longer could I have been under?"

"Not much longer," he responded.

Later I recalled another traumatic near-drowning incident when I was 7 or 8 years old. I had been at a Forest School Camp in the south of England with my sister. We were swimming in a river when, as was my custom, I put my feet down after a short stretch of swimming (I was a weak swimmer). When, instead of reassuring sand, I found myself sinking, I panicked. I had never been taught how to tread water or how to breathe out under water. Once again, I was under for a dangerously long time before my flailing around got me to a point where suddenly I could feel the river bed under my feet.

The Outward Bound Program was a strange experience. The Sedbergh boy / Army cadet found it a bit Mickey Mouse, while the post L.S.E. Canadian immigrant with the embattled nervous system became aware of just how much fear had spread throughout me. Both these states and personae are visible in this picture of me rock-climbing. Courage and will to press on upwards despite the odds, while palpable fear about losing my grip.



Back in White Rock,  
and nearing the great  
day, Joani was  
showing no fear:



## 30.

A few weeks before Joan's delivery, I received a call from Chloe in which she informed me that on the 18<sup>th</sup>. October, Jasmine Scarf had been born, healthy and sound. Just over three weeks later, on the 12<sup>th</sup>. November, a glorious sunny fall day, Joan went into labor. I drove her to the Peace Arch Hospital. Shortly after 4 p.m., as the sun was setting and the sky was gold and red, Annie Brown was born.

The doctors and nurses said it was "a beautiful birthing" – one of the most memorable they'd seen. By that, I think they meant the way in which Joan and I were so much of a team during the many hours of delivery, as well as the joy and tears we showed when Annie was born.

I was so very proud of her. She was Joani, my love, my partner for life, the wonderful mother of my child.

We entered the world of parenthood full of hope and belief for the future.

In September, Joan had written the following in a card to me:

*"I love you and want to be with you for:*

- *your many parts which form a complex and changing pattern which I'm only beginning to see and understand*
- *for your emotional, spiritual, creative, political, intellectual, physical and sexual selves*
- *your commitment to honesty*
- *your deep essential goodness*
- *being father of the child we made together, out of love and belief in each other and desire to have children*
- *your strength and courage*
- *your educational philosophy*
- *your own openness to learning*
- *you inner softness and vulnerabilities*
- *your life experiences*

*I need and want:*

- *someone to talk to, share (feelings, both + and -; ideas; actions) with*
- *someone to see me and to tell me how they see me*
- *someone to grow with (both inwardly and outwardly)*
- *someone to push with, and against, and by*
- *a man to have sex with*
- *a man to have a family with*
- *someone to say, and actually love me*
- *someone to fulfill my deep need to give to and to give love to*

*Some things I am:*

- *independent*
- *strong-willed*
- *proud*

- *responsible*
- *basically like myself*
- *feel love and empathy for people*
- *receptive*
- *have lots of energy*
- *resourceful, positive*
- *brave*
- *can forgive and regenerate caring*
- *like to make connections between things, ideas, people, see things work*
- *loyal to the people I love*

In the aftermath of Annie's birth, that is all I could see. Joan was all of the things she said she was. There was no shadow to dim the light or chill the warmth of our love.

This is the first picture that was taken of Annie after her birth:



\* \* \*

Sad to say, but within a few months, we were back on the dark side of the moon, or at the very least, we were making regular visits there.

In January 1981, Joan drew a remarkable\* picture that accurately portrayed the essence of our shadow conflict (\* *'remarkable' also because Joan so seldom drew pictures*).

**"Don't be fooled by size or volume" (Jan. 1981) The Whole Truth & Nothing But The Truth by Joani**



I was 'De Judge' with my moral judgments and punishments (whether of others or myself). And I was 'The Prophet' predicting doom if we didn't build a socialist utopia – and soon. And Joan could and did alternate between 'The Bitch' and 'The Iceberg' in a way that terrified 'Poopie'. Yes, for better or worse, that was her endearment for me ... I was her Poopie and she was my Joani, and those were the two sweet and neglected kids deep within. We were also, although not in the picture, two strong, intelligent adults, as well as caring and considerate human beings. Poopie loved Joani and Joani loved Poopie. But De Judge really had it in for The Bitch, and The Iceberg couldn't stand the 'The Prophet' and his pronouncements.

In Joan, the over-conscientious Sedbergh boy had met his match. And if you put two over-conscientious WASPS in the ring together in the year 1981, when the The Great Gender War was at its height, then .... well, take cover.

The thing is we were both determined to be 'cutting-edge' New Age parents. Responsibilities were going to be divided 50/50 right down the line. So, for example, it was decided – it was desired by both of us, that I should play my part in Annie's feeding schedule. As Joan was adamant that Annie (or 'Goopie' as we had started calling her) should have only breast milk (sounded good to me), this meant that Joan had to use a breast pump and I got to feed our baby from a bottle. Fine - in theory. In practice Goopie soon made it quite clear that she much preferred Mum's warm, soft breast to some cheap, hard, cold bottle with a fake nipple (made sense to me). So despite my conscientious efforts to get up in the middle of the night and feed her,

Annie would end up in our bed night after night enjoying the real deal.

It seemed and necessary and O.K. at first. But after a couple of months, I began to feel excluded, as well as inadequate. Why didn't I have some boobs, damnit! The fact is that as regards breast-feeding, we did not have equal power, and in the end, despite good intentions, did not take equal responsibility, and thus did not earn equal brownie points.

Annie's presence in our bed meant that Joan and I started cuddling (in all its varieties) less and less, and I began to resent the loss of intimacy. Then Poopie and Joani started to show up less and less during the day.

On the one hand, Joan and I had great powers and abilities to cooperate as we had shown in the classroom and on our excursion up north. However, the flip side of this (as depicted in Joan's drawing), was that we also seemed to display equally strong power and ability to compete. And the name of the competition was 'Who's the most virtuous parent of them all?' The drive to compete in this game / competition was not just over-conscientiousness. There was also integrity (a sense of fair play) and love involved. We both shared a deep desire to be better parents to our children than our parents had been to us.

As pressure became friction, and friction generated disagreements and fights, I began to become concerned about the future. I had been a father to Krista for six years and now, following the break-up with Jennifer, I had not had any contact with her whatsoever. It was humiliating, painful and felt quite wrong. I hadn't even dealt with my feelings regarding that situation. I had resolved, however, to take up the issue with Jennifer at a later date. Meanwhile with Joan, I was determined that the same thing could never happen again.

By March, we had already talked of separation and to my shock and dismay, I found that my fears had some foundation, when Joan told me that she didn't necessarily believe in Joint Custody in a separation situation.

That was when I started gathering information about Fathers' Rights. I bought a book entitled The Disposable Parent by Mel Roman and William Haddad (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1978; ISBN – 0-03-021156-5). The subtitle was 'The Case For Joint Custody'. What I read in the first few pages of the Introduction chilled me to the bone. This is how Haddad describes his role as a father prior to his divorce:

*"I cook (damn well), sew (I went to sea), clean (not so well), wash clothes (the machines do the work), and tend minor cuts and bruises, fevers, colds, and rashes; my daughters and I build rockets, electric motors, and doll-houses; we bake bread and sew dresses, we play touch football and softball, and write and stage plays. I try to get them to fish, but without too much success. I did all these things in the marriage and afterward."*

But despite this and both Haddad's and his three daughters' wish for joint custody, the Court awarded sole custody to Haddad's wife. Why? The wife argued that joint custody would not be "in the best interests of the child" because staying overnight at their father's place would be "disruptive of their school life", that it was not in their best interests to be "bounced back and forth between their parents", that joint custody would "create confusion" in the children's lives.

Haddad didn't want to be a "visitation father". As he put it: "I had seen too many divorced fathers at the merry-go-round in Central Park or at the zoo trying hard to 'have fun' in the hours allocated to them. I didn't want my children growing up to think of their father, and men, as a person who came around to show them a good time." Then he goes on to point out the absurd situation that under the Court's 'logic', any stranger has more rights to be with his children than he does himself; as he puts it: even though "I've never lived more than five minutes away from my children (but) when my children want help with their homework, they have to call me on the phone." And again, "when their mother is away for a week ... the children are sent to live with friends or relatives." He concludes: "there is no logic behind these arrangements, but if I were to rebel and violate the schedule, I might have to appear before a judge like a criminal and face the prospect of spending even less time with my children. The court has put a wall around the children that strangers can

penetrate but that excludes the father ... although the letter of the custody law gives each parent equal rights in divorce, the court has done everything possible, under law, to make me an ex-father as well as an ex-husband, all in the name of 'what's best for the children,' a doctrine no one has been able to define legally or psychologically." (my emphasis)

From my reading, I learned that the bias of the judicial system against the father with its 'best interests of the child' arguments, flew in the face of research findings and clinical evidence which stated overwhelmingly that the children who fared best after divorce, were those who were free to develop loving and full relationships with both parents.

It was one thing to see outdated sexist assumptions in the court system, it was another to find it in the women's movement itself:

*"One is struck by the fact that even new bibles like Frieden's The Feminine Mystique and De Beauvoir's The Second Sex say not a word about the custody of children after divorce. Nor has their silence been rectified: the subject has been virtually ignored in current feminist writing. If child custody is mentioned at all, the tendency is to call for more stringent enforcement of child-support payments, the creation of more and better day-care facilities, split work shifts for women, and so on, implying that maternal sole custody is taken for granted. ***Ironically, the very conditions that feminists decry within the intact household are encouraged in the divorced one.***" (my emphasis) (p. 150-151)*

So the question then was why were feminists not supporting child-custody reform?

Roman and Haddad point out that "there is an understandable reluctance to relinquish the one area of power that women now have."

It was in The Disposable Parent that, for the first time, I came across the phrase 'reverse sexism'. The authors state that this reverse sexism, amongst even the most liberated women, "takes the form of a doubt or negativity about the capacity and commitment of fathers to care for their young." (pp. 152-153)

The passage that resonated the most for me was the following:

*"Sharing child care is, in many ways, a threat to both parents: her femininity is threatened and his masculinity is undermined. This threat may not be consciously recognized, but it is often at work, making the woman ambivalent about her husband's involvement – experienced at times as an infringement, a loss of control – and making the man, who is beset by doubts about his capabilities, equally ambivalent and no less fearful of a loss of control, particularly in his career, heretofore a source of his security. ***Even when couples in intact marriages plan to fully share child care, these internal conflicts are raised.***" (my emphasis)*

In Joan's case, I often felt this ambivalence. On the one hand, she welcomed my support role. On the other hand, when it came to having an equal voice in what was best for Annie, she balked at

losing control.

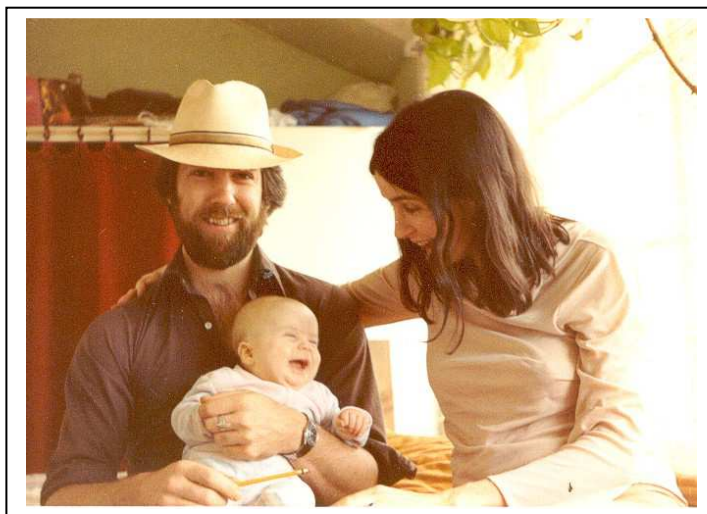
Breast-feeding was one such issue. I would argue that Annie's constant presence in our bed, undermined intimacy between Joan and I. Joan would respond that she had tried to compromise but leaving Annie in her crib hadn't worked out because she had cried. I argued that if we both tried using the bottle, then Annie might come to accept it. Joan responded by saying that in Malaysia, women breast-fed their children until at least the age of three. I responded by saying that I was sure that even in Malaysia, this didn't mean that there was virtually no sex between the father and mother for three years.

I totally supported breast-feeding (including the 'on-demand' feeding that Joan believed in) but not when it resulted in an exclusive 'marriage' of mother and child. Even without resorting to the bottle, there were ways of dealing with the situation such as putting a mattress beside the parent's bed, or at the very least, not having the child positioned between the mother and the father.

Another way that this problem could have been resolved would have been to make sure that Joan and Ian had 'quality time' at set times during the day and the week. This was talked about at great length and agreed about constantly, but in practice it rarely happened. We had a 'child-centered' and 'work-centered' family. Joan had started working at the Langley Community Music School teaching Orff music to youngsters. This job required considerable contact with parents and more often than not, Joan would spend much of the evening on the phone. Again, I supported her work including the administrative side, but there had to be some kind of limits so that we were ensured time together. The more we talked about the problem and the more it didn't change, the more resentment I began to feel.

At least there was always the weekends. Again, true – in theory. In practice, I often felt that Joan put her friendships with Rose, Dorothy and others, above her partnership with me. Rightly or wrongly, I began to feel that her priorities were (1) Annie, (2) work, (3) friends, (4) me. Joan would argue that this wasn't the case and that I often took up too much of her time and that I didn't support her relationships with her friends. This last charge really infuriated me. I felt I had always actively supported her friendships, her Tai Chi, and her Early Music Society connections, and had only ever taken issue with them when I felt that we had not seen enough of each other.

At the same time that the conflicts grew in frequency and intensity, most people saw Joan and I as 'a lovely couple', and wonderful parents to Annie. When we weren't fighting it *was* lovely. The love between us was strong. There was much commonality of values, attitudes and perceptions, especially when attention was directed away from our dyad and at the outer world.





There is no question that I brought in more 'emotional baggage' from previous relationships than did Joan. Whereas Joan's baggage mainly centered around an Indonesian man called Franz with whom she'd had an intense relationship during her time with CUSO years before, I had varying degrees of unresolved negative feelings concerning Lesley, Ellie and Jennifer. In my regular bioenergetic sessions with Ellen, I was processing these feelings. Over the months, I had got to the point where I was ready to contact Jennifer.

Extracts from letter to Jennifer: 9/1/81

*As time passes, I am trying to be more aware of the responsibility I bear for the failure of our relationship as well as be aware of what you did give me and be grateful for this. The fact remains however that, despite these attempts I continue to feel emotionally ripped off. It is not just a question of losing you as a mate. It is more importantly a question of being dispossessed of the fruits (sweet and bitter) of a six year relationship, a relationship which according to my values and apparently yours, was based on a principle that two people respect and care enough for each other to continue to work out their relationship even during and after a break-up. I also feel dispossessed of a 'daughter'. In both cases, there is nothing to show. It's as if nothing was ever given, or shared, or agreed upon.*

*And so to what I feel I have a right to expect:*

Given that:

- (1) we were common law man and wife (according to one definition or another) for six years,*
- (2) for six years I had a parental role and status to a greater or lesser extent as Krista's father (the extent of my role having much to do with the state of my relationship with you at the time; the degree of my statue fluctuating not only with the state of our relationship but also the increasing role and status given to, and taken by Ted),*
- (3) that throughout those six years, we both, on many occasions, decided and agreed to honour principles of reciprocation of emotional, moral and even financial support, and if separation seemed the best or only course to take, that we would honour the precepts and practices of 'creative divorce'.*

I feel I have the right:

- (1) to expect that we remain in touch and share such basic information and feelings necessary to work out and sustain some kind of friendship, and failing this, at the least to agree on some basic minimum contact. (e.g. information on change of address, etc.)*
- (2) to expect access to Krista so as to preserve some kind of relationship.*

*Finally, some news from my side. I am still living at the same address and am presently working at Douglas College. I am living with someone and we have a beautiful baby daughter, Annalie, who was born in November '80. We may get married at some point.*

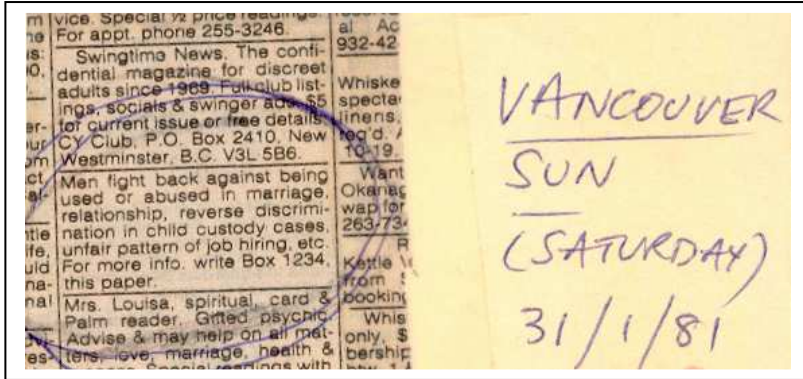
*This is all the news that I care to share at present.*

*I would appreciate a response to this letter,*

*My best wishes to you, Ian*

I heard back from Jennifer a while later. She was friendly and open to meeting, but said that she didn't think it was a good idea that Krista and I get together. In my gut the fires burned on.

I hated feeling so impotent. If there were no men's or father's groups out there, then what was stopping me from instigating one? I decided to put an ad. In The Vancouver Sun. It was printed on the 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1981 and appeared in the 'Personals' column squeezed in between the 'Swingtime News' and Mrs. Louise, the palm reader.



I only received two replies and neither of them were particularly significant.

## 31.

Both my mother in Edinburgh and Joan's mother in Toronto were, of course, thrilled about the birth of Annie. After much talk, it was arranged that Helen would come out to B.C. in April and the following month Joan, Annie and I would fly to Britain to visit my mother.

I had already started writing an autobiographical novel that would later be entitled Chameleon, so I was very much in touch with the 60's and early seventies. Having severed my links to Britain so radically when I was in Quebec, I was now beginning to feel the need to reconnect. I knew that the upcoming U.K. trip was a chance to do this. For example, much as it unnerved me, I knew that I would have to take Joan to Sedbergh and at least give her a glimpse of what life was like there. Given that we were going in May, I knew that such a visit would entail contact with the school in session, with all its implications for possible encounters with teachers from my past. I shuddered at the prospect and wondered how I should disguise myself – 'incognito' was the operative word.

The key person from my Sedbergh past was David Lungley. I had completely lost contact with him but I resolved to track him down. I somehow managed to do this through the old school network and found out that he was living in Devon. With much trepidation, I wrote to him. A month or so, I received a reply in which he told me that after he had completed his Ph.D in Australia, he had returned to Britain with his wife, Frances. Over the following years, they had had two more children to add to Gareth, their son who had been born in Australia. Then David, like me, in his late twenties had received the call to become a teacher. He and Frances had bought an old cottage in the heart of rural Devon and David had proceeded to scour the environs for a school at which he could teach. In the end, he had got a job as a science teacher at Wellington School, a boy's boarding school about an hour's drive away from where they lived. We had only written a couple of letters back and forth before I told David that Joan and I were coming to Britain in the spring. I suggested that possibly we could meet briefly in London.

The other key contact from my past in Britain was Françoise. It was seven years since I had last heard anything about Françoise and this was in a letter from my brother Robin. I had asked him to try to locate Françoise because she still had my trunk containing mainly books and binders from university days. He had managed to find her and this had been his comment about that encounter in a letter to me in 1974: "*after some investigation, I finally traced Françoise to 9 Clissold Road, Stoke Newington, N. 16. She, I am sad to say, has gone entirely to seed and looked an awful mess, totally negative, dirty, unkempt, and living in a large condemned house in a row of the same.*"

Ever since leaving her behind in Britain in 1972, and especially after receiving that news from Robin, I had felt guilty. I had so much caring for Françoise and I didn't want her to suffer, especially if I felt it was somehow because of me.

I had Françoise's parents' address and phone number in Grigny, near Lyons. Some time in 1980, as I was in the process of breaking up with Jennifer, I had made a long distance call to France. In my best French I had told her mother that I was an old friend of Françoise (I had actually met the mother on one occasion) and could she tell me where she was living. Her mother gave me an address in London in the Euston area. I had then written to Françoise and told her that I was living in British Columbia with a partner and that we'd had a baby. I added that I would really like to see her on the upcoming visit to Britain. Before long, I received a reply:

*Letter from Françoise: 21/1/81*

*"I was terribly surprised, and shocked and also upset at receiving your letter – over a year ago, wasn't it? ... I was surprised you should have an urge to think back of me just*

*because you broke up with a woman. I guess I should have been flattered ... I wasn't."*  
*"I have been working for the B.B.C. for 2 years now – as a make-up assistant. Perhaps one day, you will see my name on the television screen!!"*  
*"You said once, 'if we ever parted, you'd still think of me as a friend in 10 year's time ... does it still apply?"*

Fair enough (with respect to the opening comments), and I was delighted that she had a decent job and had obviously extricated herself from the difficult place in which she had been. I did regard Francoise as a friend, and I did want to keep in touch with her. I wrote back and suggested we meet in London.

A while later she responded with a warm letter:

*Letter from Francoise: 21/4/81*

*"I was touched and flattered by your letter because you said such nice things about our friendship."*

*"I am glad you now have a child. It must give such a warm feeling to have a young life to care for; maternal or paternal love is the one love you can truly regard as ever durable and look forward to every day of your life. I hope you are very happy with your family. It didn't really "set off old and hurt feelings" in me to hear about your baby. It always hurts when I hear of new babies because as you know, I have never conceived (since 11 years ago), and that is a pain which I have to learn to cope with as I may never be pregnant.*

*"It does seem strange to think of you as a father and I remember wanting very much to have your baby!!"*

*"Thank-you very much for wanting to keep in touch."*

These contacts with Francoise were done in the light of full consultation with Joan. Compared to my growing distrust of both men and women, Joan seemed understanding, compassionate and accepting. Then again, I had given her no reason to distrust me where other women were concerned.

Meanwhile, I continued to feel emotionally raw. The weekly bioenergetic sessions with Ellen kept the feelings close to the surface. Bioenergetics was based on the theories of Walter Lowen and Wilhelm Reich. The idea was that emotions can become trapped in the body and so lead to both psychosomatic and psychological problems. In contradistinction to 'talk' therapy, Reich believed that working on the body and subsequent emotional release was the way to go. This involved an emphasis on breathing techniques to free up energy, as well as intentionally putting the body into stress positions so as to induce the underlying emotions. In addition to my individual sessions, I had attended several group sessions led by Ellen. The predominant emotions that would reverberate during these sessions were anger (facilitated by racket pounding, leg pounding, screaming, etc), pain (tears, foetal position, hugs, etc), fear (encouragement of verbal and physical expressions), disgust (there was even encouragement of actual throwing up), and on the positive side, joy, ecstasy, sexual feelings and oceanic love. In my case, there seemed to be no end to the anger and pain. And it was usually directed at my father, Lesley, Ellie, or more recently at Jennifer for her 'abduction' of Krista. Somehow, it was still *verboten* to get angry at my mother. In my emotional make-up, she was still the victim of my father and I was the rescuer.

I was only beginning to get insights into the way in which men's chivalry fashioned their relationships with women.

Just as the writings of R.D. Laing and Jonathon Kozol kept me sane with on one level, the only book that I had come across that validated some of my perceptions from a male point of view was The Hazards of Being Male by Herb Goldberg.

For example:

*"The savage infighting among the feminist leadership wore me down ... the reason women are such crude, brutal and destructive combatants, i later decided – the reason women*

*fighters lack pace, grace, rhythm and mercy – is certainly not because we are subject to raging hormonal impulses as some men claim ... I think that hair-trigger female fury, the surge to leap for the jugular at the merest drop of a glove, the readiness to ‘drop the bomb on Luxembourg’, results from the lack of a female tradition of chivalry.” (my emphasis) (Shana Alexander, ‘Will Power Change Women?’, Newsweek, April 1<sup>st</sup>. 1974, p. 30) (quoted in The Hazards of Being Male, p. 27)*

and Fred Hayward’s keynote speech to the just-formed National Congress for Men in 1981:

*“We must not reverse the women’s movement; we must accelerate it ... men’s liberation is not a backlash, for there is nothing about traditional sex roles that I want to go back to ... we must give full credence to the seriousness of women’s problems and be willing to work towards their solution, but if the others do not return the favor, it is they who are the sexist pigs. It is they who are reactionary. When I look at feminists today, I don’t want to call them names – I only want to call their bluff.”*  
*No matter how much men bend over backwards to please women, they will be exploited for it all the more. There never was a feminine code of ethics equivalent to the masculine code of ethics (a.k.a. chivalry) that forces men to be fair and generous to women. Feminists can afford to be ruthlessly selfish without having to feel any pangs of conscience or moral constraints.” (my emphasis)*

For my part, as in my advertisement in the Vancouver Sun, more and more I was feeling the urge to fight back against this deep-seated conditioning to always be chivalrous.

I felt I was living in a world dominated by women. I had lost touch with the male world of Sedbergh. I had sustained only one male friendship since my days in Montreal and that was my close friendship with Martin Baker. Martin was the one who had enticed me out to the West Coast. Martin was the one who had pointed me in the direction of White Rock. Martin was the one to whom I poured out my heart. And the same was true in reverse. In February, I received a letter from Eugene, Oregon, where Martin was nearing the end of his Master’s Degree:

*Letter from Martin: 9/2/81*

*“People seem to want pieces of me. Mark wants the organizer. Caroline wants the supportive male. Coleen wants my sensitivity. No one wants all of me.*

*Have you ever felt crippled because you’re too sensitive? I feel like I have this handicap.*

*“Like you said, I feel I’ve taken an inordinate amount of my life figuring out who I am.*

*Where’s the pay off?”*

*“I’m happy when I’m active, organizing these neighborhood folk into an inadequate group of over-cautious bureaucrats. They have no sense of ‘praxis’. They’re following a dogma of false beliefs in this organic wonderland. I’m flying along with them, stoned on caffeine and dope, hyper-ventilating my radical approach, feeling more vulnerable every day, and getting less support as I crawl to the end of the branch. I can’t help being public, I’m too far ahead. Reality is lost to me as my ‘youthful idealism’ brings me close to the chasm of public ridicule and failure. Why did I choose to be an organizer? I have no future, no stability and no credibility. I’m living in a country of conservatives and powerless liberal-egos.”*

*“I don’t want to be saved, rescued or shown the way. Alone, I’ll slowly pull myself up, start working, and in no time I’ll be back to my old self again. No-one will ever know. So much*

*anger; I store it so well. Ride the waves like the intelligent, attractive and sensitive person Martin is."*

*"The end is near, and survival is imminent. One Master's degree coming up – hold the mustard."*

*"I love you Ian and appreciate your letters and your willingness to stick with me."*

*"I feel so sad that life is so oppressive to people. Think where we could be if people really trusted each other and believed in equity and justice."*

*"I lost another job recently because I was perceived as a troublemaker ... it's always the same. I set myself up by speaking out, then fold when the pressure gets hot."*

As the time grew nearer for Helen's visit in April, the disagreements between Joan and I were developing into verbal fights. We alternated between being (and being seen as) the perfect couple – deeply caring and loving towards each other and our daughter – and two antagonists circling each other warily in the gender warfare ring.

As in her previous visit, Helen's presence seemed to de-stress things rather than the other way around. The quartet of mother, father, daughter and grandmother seemed to be more stable than the trio-triangle of Joan, Annie and I. Sometimes we all went on excursions. Sometimes, Joan and I left Goopie with Grandma and enjoyed the delicious freedom of being untethered from all parental responsibilities for a while. Sometimes, when Joan was teaching, it would be just Helen, Annie and I – and that was O.K. too; we always had plenty to talk about and I could tell that Helen thought I was a good father. And then there were the times that I had go down to the cramped basement and pursue my writing with no sense of guilt that I was avoiding one kind of parental or spousal responsibility or another. The inevitable questions of marriage came up. Why didn't we get married? Would we consider it? But Joan and I both seemed resolute about maintaining a common-law arrangement, not because of lack of commitment but because of our generation's distrust of both marriage and the nuclear family. Joan had been deeply influenced by many aspects of living in Malaysia. It wasn't just the importance of breast-feeding. It was also the way that the extended family and the community interacted for the benefit of all. Helen being there at least gave us a taste of some of the benefits of an extended family.

The visit to Britain was presaged by two events of significance. First, a letter from my brother Robin:

*Letter from Robin: 14/4/82*

*"I got a call from our cousin Elizabeth yesterday. It appears that Mum is in a highly excitable state at the moment and has fallen out with Auntie Doris (again) and has been ringing Auntie Margaret nightly and talking to her in highly charged tones, none of which she has understood. She (Elizabeth) wanted to know if I was aware of the situation and seemed surprised when I said I was. What she thought I could do about it I haven't a clue as it's been going on unbeknown to the Burchells for quite some time."*

*"I fear that the more we advance towards the 2<sup>nd</sup>. May and your arrival, the more excited Mum is going to become. If you do come and things get out of hand, you may be sure that on your call, I'll take the first plane to Turnhouse.*

*I finally came down to earth regarding my career and dropped out of the rat-race of high-powered accountancy settling instead for Credit Control."*

And secondly, Joan and I had a clash of wills about the possibility of her taking Annie to Toronto alone in the summer whether or not I agreed to the idea. I was outraged that Joan would consider such unilateral action, just as I had been a year before when she had told me that she didn't necessarily believe in Joint Custody. These positions became yet more incendiary when I reflected on them in the light of Jennifer's unilateral removal of Krista from my life.

In fact the issue of Joan going to Toronto with Annie had first arisen a few months before at Christmas time. At that time, the essence of the argument was as follows (as reconstructed from my diary):

- Joan: I want to take Annie to Toronto over the Christmas holidays*
- Ian: I thought we had already decided not to go to Toronto and to stay here and relax ... and, for that matter, work on our relationship.*
- Joan: Well, I want to go and if you don't want to come, fine ... but I have to tell you that four people have said to me recently "why don't you go anyway?"*
- Ian: So you feel you have a right to go no matter what I say?*
- Joan: Look, I would prefer it if you expressed that opinion as a statement, "you have no right to ...", than make it a question. I feel like I'm in a court of law and you're cross-questioning me.*
- Ian: I feel like I'm in a banana republic when you get to dictate to me what is going to happen to our daughter.*
- Joan: I know Christmas is a bumner time for you and if you push me on this, I won't go, out of loyalty to you.*
- Ian: It's not a question of loyalty, it's a question of responsibility ... and rights. We have agreed on taking equal responsibility for Annie, and I hope you believe we have equal rights.*

Joan hadn't gone to Toronto at Christmas but the issue was unresolved from both sides. I felt furious because of this contradiction between rights and responsibility. With Jennifer, I had taken responsibility for a child who was not mine. I had been told that I was a wonderful 'social father'. And then, at separation I had been denied any right of access. Now with my own biological daughter, I had tried in every way to be an equal partner when it came to parenting – whether feeding, bathing, changing diapers, cooking, baby-sitting, etc. In my mind, Joan wanted me to take equal responsibility, but through her words and actions on two key occasions, had demonstrated that she was not prepared to honor equal rights. She could be so holier-than-thou, so mystified in believing that love could solve everything while turning a blind eye to differentials of power. She discredited my motives. She discredited my perceptions. She discredited my integrity. But when she denied my basic rights as a father, then yes, I did feel we were approaching a court of law situation.

The 'go to Toronto' issue led to open talk of separation and it was with this acrimonious dispute still clouding the atmosphere, that a few weeks later we flew to Britain.





“Your baby is going to be like you, Joan. Her eyes are like yours.” My mother smiled at Joan as she held Annalie in her arms.

It was our first day in Edinburgh. I felt the matriarchal alliance kicking in.

“How about me?” I asked, only half-jokingly.

“Well, she’s got your mouth,” replied my mother without a smile.

Joan sensed my discomfort. “I think that Annie has got the Brown genes. I’m so skinny.”

“You, Joan, could be in a Miss World Competition,” said my mother emphatically. And then, “come on Annalie, eat you food.”

And as I watched my mother with Annie, in some deep part of my psyche, I remembered what it was like to be my mother’s son at an early age. My father was ‘The Major’, distant, aloof and intimidating. My mother was ‘The Sergeant-Major’, omnipresent and barking out orders; “finish your meal”, “eat it all up”, “hurry up now”. There was no space for two-way dialogue.

My sister never seemed to be around on the parade-ground, and if anyone ‘answered back’, it was my brother. He seemed to have certain special privileges with my mother because of the handicap of his club foot, and perhaps to compensate for the ill treatment he received from my father. I was expected to be the model recruit – eager, obedient, the flag-bearer of the Brown contingent.

However at other times, the Sergeant-Major would morph into the over-protective mother elephant, a caring but needy matriarch who would reach out to her children from her sadness and depression and say ‘help, comfort me’. At times like these, it felt like not only external space was being dominated, but that there was an invasion of inner personal space.

*Extract from diary: 6/5/81*

*We have only been here for a few days and it feels like an eternity. I am down on myself, making comparisons with ex-Sedbergh friends, even people I see on the streets. I feel like a failure. Today I feel pressure being in the house. It seems as if my mother, Joan and I all feel unloved and angry at the same time. I feel responsible for everyone’s happiness. I have to get away. “I’m going out to buy a stroller for Goopie,” I say.*

*In the street, I feel paranoid about how people see me; run-down condition, droopy eyes, unkempt hair, scruffy beard, holes in shoes, tatty jacket. I buy the stroller somewhere on Princess Street, aware that the shop assistant thinks I’m an American due to my accent.*

*I can’t go back just yet. Need more space. I dive into a bookstore and head instinctively for the ‘Psychology’ section. I pull out a book on Reich by Colin Wilson and start skimming the Preface. Wilson describes Reich as ‘an unpleasant man’, ‘paranoid’, who made ‘false choices that got him into a mess’. Again I make comparisons and stroke negatively. What am I doing? What have I done? Like Reich I am in a mess, the golden boy who took a wrong turn and fucked up. I am full of explosive rage and resentment. Fuck the middle-class consumerism of Princess Street. Fuck the elitist opulence of Jenners and the ex-public school stiffs that I can spot a mile away, with their cavalry twills, hush puppies and their stodgy burberry raincoats.*

It’s 4 p.m. and tea time. I am back from my excursion and have scored a few points due to the fact that everyone admires the sturdy British-made stroller; ‘Tea Time’ – the mandatory event on the

daily schedule, not to be missed for any reason.

“Do you have a job?” asks my mother as she pours tea from the special-occasion silver teapot.

“Yes, Mum. I have already told you, I am a teacher, an English teacher. I teach new immigrants. I have been a teacher for many years.”

‘How many years?’, I think to myself. ‘My God! I am 34 now. I went back to do my Teacher’s Diploma in 1976. I have officially been a teacher for four years (and unofficially for longer than that), and my mother still doesn’t know what my occupation is’.

“It’s hard to get a job these days. Lots of unemployment,” she continues as if I had said nothing.

‘Hard to get a job’ ... didn’t I know it. In the U.S. Reagan had been in power for less than a year. On inauguration day, he had said, “government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem’. In the U.K., Margaret Thatcher had been in power for exactly two years. She had already reduced the power of the unions, decreased public spending, increased personal tax cuts, increased privatization of public utilities, and deregulated industry. Her programs were producing increasingly high unemployment, high interest rates and increased class differentiation, as well as growth of an underclass. In Canada, we were in the middle of a severe recession and the unemployment rate was over 11% and climbing. People were saying that it was the highest since the Great Depression. Yes, I knew all about how hard it was to get a job. And yet, despite the fact that my status at Kwantlen College was still temporary, I felt I had been lucky since moving to B.C. It was all relative.

*Extract from diary: 7/5/81*

*Much better day. I pick up our rented Mini-Metro car and we all go off to North Berwick for the day. We walk the golf course where I played in the Scottish Boys Open Tournament. Mum transforms from the Sergeant-Major into a strong, intelligent, independent woman. Joan and I laugh and chat and feel like a couple. Annie doesn’t cry and is in a benign mood. The sun shines. I even play some golf which feels wonderful. I reconnect with my former self. I am no longer a failure. I am a dutiful son, a caring husband and a doting father – with a shiny, new car.*

*Extract from Diary: 11/5/81*

*Mum and I go on a long walk to Threipmuir Reservoir. We left the car near Swanton Cottage (where Robert Louis Stephenson used to live) and walked over heather moorland in the Pentland hills overlooking Balerno.*

*Mum goes into a ‘case history’ of her and Dad’s psychological problems. Much of it is news to me. Apparently, she has had three visits to Craighouse in the past, twice in the fifties and once around 1967. At one point, it was suggested that she have E.C.T. She said she had seen a psychiatrist called Dr. Parry on Charlotte Square at the suggestion of Dr. Alexander, the family doctor.*

*A couple of months prior to our trip, she had had a ‘relapse’ and her doctor had recommended that she take Stellazine. I don’t tell her that a couple of days ago, when I visited her current doctor, Dr. Deuchars, he had said to me that she was ‘certifiable’ and a ‘chronic paranoid’. Mum talks about ‘justifiable life causes for depression’, like the loss of Duncan and Andrew, her first two sons. She says that the reason that I was sent to Sedbergh was because of her ‘states’ and the state of her relationship with Dad. Then she related the incident that had led to Robin’s letter to me prior to our visit.*

*She had been on a visit to Auntie Doris and had felt bad vibes from ‘The Boffin’. She had got angry and had suggested that Doris was behind the ‘attack’. Doris then got angry in turn and Mum stormed out.*

*The next day, she had returned to Doris's house 'to explain'. Doris had got the architect from the flat above to come down and 'be a witness'. Then Doris had told Mum 'not to darken her doorstep again'.*

*We keep walking and Mum keeps talking.*

*Then she talks about 'confusion and conspiracy', and that Auntie Mollie, Uncle Dick and Auntie Margaret think of her as 'an ogre'. She keeps going on about 'hearsay' and how she doesn't believe anything she hears anymore. 'People tells lies to confuse the enemy', she tells me, 'just like the deliberate misinformation in wartime'.*

*Then she shocks me by saying that Dad also had a breakdown and had been sent to Woodlawn Hospital in Surrey, following his return from South Africa. He had been diagnosed as having 'anxiety neurosis'.*

*'He went crazy when he was refused his promotion to Colonel on the grounds of his tropical diseases', she said.*

*Then it was back to her family.*

*'My sister Adelaide was no more crazy than me or anyone else', she said. 'Grandsie and my father left Adelaide to look after William night after night,' she said. 'She had to take care of him when he had his epileptic fits – no wonder she had a breakdown!'*

*Jeez, and I thought I had problems! And of course Mum puts my breakdown at L.S.E. down to 'genes'.*

*When we got back, I slip out to the corner store for a pack of cigarettes. I need them.*

\* \* \*

Joan and I had planned an escape from Edinburgh. On the 12<sup>th</sup>. May, Joan took a train down to Chester to spend a couple of days with Dorothy, her friend from Victoria who was also visiting her family in Britain.

I drove down the next day, spent one night at Dorothy's house, and then Joan, Annie and I headed north up the M6 to Kendal and then east to Sedbergh. I had to show Joan my real home, or at least what had been my home for five years. I discovered that it was still my spiritual home, but no longer a source of emotional security.

This was my first contact with Sedbergh since 1966. Then I had left the school in a blaze of glory, a member of the 1<sup>st</sup>. XV in Rugby, a School Prefect, Head of the C.C.F., and within a few months, holder of a Commonwealth Scholarship to study at Queens University in Canada. Rather than striding proudly through the grounds of the school and town, as I had at that time, fifteen years previous, now I kept my head low lest someone might recognize me. It was a clandestine visit and I was incognito, thankful for the 'disguise' of my long hair, beard and Canadian lumberjacket.

It all looked the same and it all felt so very different. There were the boys on the cricket field, in their white shirts and gray 'trousers'. I saw a few 'masters' (did we really call them that?!) that I recognized, but who fortunately did not appear to recognize me. It was a hasty tour in which I pointed out the Chapel, Powell House and the Cloisters.

It was only when we climbed Winder that I felt I could breathe a sigh of relief and appreciate, once again, the wonderful Cumbrian environment. As I looked down at the town of Sedbergh below, I was able to sink into happy memories, albeit permeated by a profound sense of sadness at how I had cut myself off so completely from my roots. I knew I had become forever estranged.

Here is a picture of Annie and I on the slopes of Winder, with the town of Sedbergh nestled below:



*Extract from Diary: 18/5/81*

*Robin arrived yesterday with Shuna. Today Joan told me that Robin had told her that he thought I had been 'self-pitying' and a 'cry-baby' in the let-it-all-hang-out tape I had sent him after I had broken up with Jennifer. Gee, thanks for the support Robin!*

*I am exhausted and sick with resentment. Resentment of Mum's invalidation of my solidarity with her in 1964 when I defied my father by deciding not to enter Sandhurst. Her words 'maybe your father was right' that she had uttered before and now repeated, cut me to the quick. I am resentful of Robin's patriarchal tone (so ironically reminiscent of my father himself). I am no longer 'the golden boy' – if anything Robin is now the hero, for having a job (seemingly steady), a great relationship with his partner, a seemingly good relationship with his daughter Shuna (with whom he was an 'absentee father' for much of her upbringing), and bravely overcoming all the handicaps that had been thrown in his path. I am resentful of Joy's occupational success and bourgeois lifestyle in Montreal – to say nothing of her past lack of interest or support for Mum's situation. I am resentful of how everyone seems to think that Joan is 'a star', or should I say 'the star'. Meanwhile Joan is cold and withdrawn from me right now. She told me that she is hurt because I made a comment about how we don't laugh like Robin and Claire, or Mum and Claire, or even Mum and Robin.*

*The Sedbergh boy reflects gloomily on Canada. It seems cold, distant and alienating.*

Extract from Diary: 20/5/81

*Can it get any crazier? Today Mum had a fall, broke her wrist and bruised her ribs very badly. Robin and I had to take her to the Infirmary and now she is back with her arm in a sling. Meanwhile Joan has a bad cold and a fever and Annie is crying a lot. I try to show my caring but Joan gets grumpy if not downright angry when she's sick. We have lost the link we had during our visit to Sedbergh.*

\* \* \*

In the final week before returning to Canada, I took the train down to London to spend a couple of days at Robin and Claire's house, leaving Shuna, Joan and Annie with my mother.

Finally it was time to meet up with David and Françoise.

I met Françoise at noon near Euston Station. It was not an easy meeting. Françoise was tense and appeared cynical and distrustful, not to me in particular but to the world in general. I could tell she was glad to meet me but I had a bit of a struggle explaining why I wanted a friendship.

We went to a pub, then later had a meeting at a Chinese restaurant in Soho. We both attempted to fill in the past nine years since the awful day that I had left her at The Cut and flown back to Canada. There was no question that Françoise had been through a traumatic period including four years with a junkie and then two years with 'a mad Scotsman' (another one!). She wanted to know why Joan and I weren't legally married. I tried to explain, then I made the mistake of showing her a photo of Annie. Her eyes glazed in defensiveness.

I knew that under the layers of accumulated experience, we still loved each other on some level. But it was emotional pain that permeated our meeting and at the end, I didn't really know whether we would be able to sustain a friendship in the future but I hoped that we would.

I met David later that same day at Trafalgar Square. He was sitting on the steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields. He was taller and broader but there was no mistaking him even after the many years since we had last met. Beside him were his wife, Frances, and their three children, Gareth, Julia and Howard.

I was nervous. Here was my one and only direct link to my Sedbergh past. I was sure he was going to be shocked at how I had changed. If he was, he didn't show it. Surprised at my changed accent and serious demeanor perhaps, but not shocked.

He appeared more confident and his voice was deeper than I remembered. From the onset, I liked the way he related to Frances and his children. The mutual respect and caring was clear to see. I registered with approval how his parental style was to solicit input from the children while retaining command. This, I reflected, was how it should be – not the capitulation to whatever the child wanted that was so prevalent back in Canada, and which was a source of so much friction between Joan and I.

We went for a tea at a nearby restaurant where we talked and talked. Here are some comments from my diary:

Extract from diary: 24/5/81

*Before we met, I had half-expected to find that the distance between our respective paths over the 12 or so intervening years would be impossible to bridge. So I was happy when it was clear that there was still a fundamental soul-connection.*

*Four hours of validation from David!*

*"There was an atmosphere of hatred that time I stayed with you at your home in Edinburgh. I had never seen such an unhappy pair as your parents. It's not surprising that you have had so much to work out."*

*"I felt bad on our Europe trip because I couldn't joke around in the way that you did ... by the way, what happened to your sense of humor? There wasn't much to laugh about at Sedbergh but you lightened so many situations."*

*"Your style, Ian, is open, honest. You dive into things with your enthusiasm."*

*"Music is such a big part of my life now. You are responsible for what I learned on the guitar and at the piano. I am so grateful for that."*

*"I was not a natural teacher. I have had to learn."*

*And I wonder at the intrinsic humility and goodness of this man, just as I did at Sedbergh, just as I wonder if I am still the same person he describes. Deep down I know I am. It was such an important meeting, and unlike with Françoise, I have faith that we have a bed-rock upon which to resurrect our friendship.*

*When we parted, I felt grateful that David Lungley existed and honored to have him as my friend.*

The next day, I rushed to King's Cross to catch the 10 a.m. train back to Edinburgh. Robin saw me off. It really did seem that my brother was a changed man since meeting Claire. There was a chemistry between them that worked. They seemed to be able to not only laugh but also argue without things going off the rails. Claire was an ex-opera singer who now worked in an old-folks home. She was an intelligent, sensitive and empathetic person and had become a mother figure to Shuna as well as a caring daughter-in-law to my mother. She was also a wonderful cook which further endeared her to me.

As the train pulled away from the station, some of Robin's comments echoed in my mind.

"I stopped being my own worst enemy" ... "I slowed down" ... "I stopped trying to meet such high standards" ... "you are attached to Mum in a way that I am not ..."

And then some Americans took their seats nearby. I observed them for a minute or two and then felt as if I had to seek my British self for refuge. Their faces appeared to me grasping and greedy. Their voices were loud and harsh. The women played cards and talked endlessly and intrusively. The husbands were docile and hen-pecked. They appeared to be tagging along for the ride.

Oh dear, only two days before the return to North America.

## EPILOGUE

White Rock: February 2007

It is a long time since I first started writing Chameleon and then Phoenix – at least thirty years. Originally, the aim was to make sense of my scattered experiences, to somehow weave together the disparate strands of what seemed like several quite separate and distinct ‘lives’. Then, as my children were born, the aim re-focused on wanting to tell my story as accurately as possible so that they could know who their father was – especially in the event of untimely death.

Writing both these books was extremely time consuming because so much detailed research was necessary. What helped the most in establishing dates and recounting the details of different experiences were the annual day-planners and my diaries.

I considered continuing Phoenix past the point that Annie was born, but decided that I didn’t want to re-construct a reality of which my children had been a part. They will have their own memories and interpretations. So, with an enormous sense of relief, I can say ‘this is it’. I am finished with this kind of writing and will now turn my attention to other writing and music projects

However, the last chapter finished on such an unresolved note, that I think a brief epilogue, in which I sketch the details of the main events that happened between 1981 and 2007, makes sense. That is what follows.

\* \* \*

As far as my career goes, I worked as an E.S.L. teacher at Kwantlen University College continuously from 1980 to 2001. In 1987 and 1988, when work at Kwantlen was limited to the summers, I took a Music Therapy Diploma at Capilano College. From that point on, up until the present day, I have worked as a part-time music therapist, sometimes on a weekly basis and sometimes with just one or two ‘gigs’ a month. In my various experiences, I have worked with geriatric patients in hospitals and old-age homes, with stroke patients, Alzheimers patients and psychiatric patients. I also worked for a while in the palliative ward at Peace Arch Hospital.

The only other paid work I have done has been as a music entertainer (at pub nights, wedding receptions, and various other gigs), and as a researcher / writer for Margaret Horn and NIICHO (The National Indian and Inuit Community Health Representatives Organization) – for whom I wrote a series of articles for their ‘In Touch’ publication, entitled ‘Mental Health and Wellness in Aboriginal Communities (vol. 26, Spring 2003).

In 1984, my son Ben was born. He is now 22 and completing studies in the music program at Vancouver Community College. He is a very talented drummer and guitarist and has many years of experience in public performance with various different bands. Annie is 26. She completed a degree at U.B.C. in Marine Biology four years ago. Since that time, she has lived and worked in Vancouver. For

the past two years she has worked at a shop called 'Celtic Traditions'. Like Ben, music is at the centre of her life. She has become a sought-after Celtic fiddler and performs on a regular basis.

I didn't get to know Jasmine until she was about 17. For a while Jasmine went to Film school in Vancouver and then she went to live in Montreal with her boyfriend Paddy. She went to Dawson College and then to Concordia. She is presently completing an undergraduate degree in 'Theatre Education'. Like Annie and Ben, she is an intelligent, sensitive and caring person.

My mother lived to a grand old age and died eventually at the age of 90 on February 25<sup>th</sup>. 2000. In the eighties, she had visited Canada several times and we had seriously entertained the possibility of her coming to live in White Rock. But in the end she stayed in her Edinburgh flat. Her main occupation in the last twenty years of her life was drawing pictures taken from scenes of childhood memory or from Edinburgh street scenes. She had keen perception and her technique steadily improved. Further interest was provided by the way she would often combine 'word-associations' with the picture. The process was therapeutic and the sheer volume of her output was extraordinary. In 1991, I arranged for an exhibit of some of her drawings at The Central Edinburgh Library. Although my mother thought it was a modest affair, it was – in my opinion – considerable local recognition for her creative work.

There were difficult times between Joy, Robin and I over how best to take care of our mother, but in the later stages of her life, there was a higher degree of cooperation between the three of us. My mother died in St. Raphael's Nursing Home, which was located right next to the Astley Ainslie Gardens – my mother's favorite place in all of Edinburgh.

\* \* \*

In the previous chapter, I described how, despite a deep bond, Joan and I developed patterns of conflict that seemed hard to resolve. In the end, we stayed together for fourteen years. During this time there were ups and down, but overall we both became despondent as it seemed that in certain key ways, we were incompatible. There was no infidelity, rather just a gradual erosion of the foundation of our relationship. We both had such a commitment to make our partnership work that it was very painful to go through the experience of its demise. In August 1994, after a period of trial separation, I moved out of Totem Coop and into a house on the Semiahmoo First Nations Land near the border.

What Joan and I shared throughout our time together was a focus on our children and our respective work as teachers. As Annie and Ben grew older, we realized we had two wonderful children. When they were young, Joan taught them music at Langley Community School using the Orff method. Later, I influenced them to play by ear. For me, the highlight of our time spent together as a family was a trip to Oregon in July 1991. We camped beside the beach and spent several days luxuriating in the freedom of the massive sand dunes and the magnificent shoreline, unbroken vistas of the Pacific, and spectacular sunsets.

We have all had health setbacks. Annie was diagnosed with Krohn's disease in her teens. Ben had a growth in his ear that resulted in two operations to remove the benign tumor. In my case, in 1986, a combination of ongoing stress plus a traumatic incident in an ultralight aircraft, led to a nervous breakdown with all its attendant symptoms of panic attacks, insomnia, and personality disintegration. More recently, Joan had an accident in which she fell down a flight of stairs and was airlifted to hospital with many bones in her right wrist and arm shattered. We have all dealt with our problems in our own ways – in each case, I believe, with courage and perseverance.