

Jack Pearpoint – Tribute to Judith Snow

June 6, 2015

I am an emissary: I bring greetings from Judith - and the welcome party where she is singing and dancing and carrying on with all her formerly departed friends. Marsha is pounding on the piano; Shafik is dancing with white pants on; Herb Lovett is debating with Father Pat, and Peter Dill is the smiling mediator. Scotty, Maria, David and a throng of other children are squealing and eating ice cream. Henry Moore has linked up with Waddie Welcome and Addie Reeves, and Ed Roberts has just crashed the party. The Circle is swirling, scooping up innocents who have no idea about the 'reorganizing' that is about to begin. The guest list is in fact infinite..

Some of you may have been wondering what Judith was doing before she died. It's true she had a touch of bronchitis, but that didn't stop her partying full out on Saturday night – to welcome Bill Worrell to the exalted Seniors Club Judith earlier. On Sunday, after assembling six 'directives for action' for her Circle, she finally went to bed – with her computer. She emailed ME about books at 10:34. Then she started to work on the payroll. She didn't finish. She died at 10:45 when her unstoppable heart stopped.

My friendship with Judith is almost four decades old. It began when my late wife Marsha Forest recruited Judith to assist in teaching education students about 'disability' – by introducing them to a real person. She brought Judith home. I built a ramp. She ate – and stayed over. And so it began.

When she graduated from York with her MA, there was no paid work, and she no longer qualified for student support, so she was graduated to the Ontario government's only option for her – a Nursing Home. That was a disaster. Meanwhile, the medical establishment had weighed and measured Judith, and with clarity informed her she would be dead by 30. She was 29 and getting sicker. But in Judith fashion, she announced she refused to die in a Nursing home so she 'moved out'. That plan collapsed, and in terminal desperation, she ended up at our house – with no money, no job, no place to live, and no personal

assistants. That night, in crisis, we assembled friends and began planning. Judith later dubbed us the Joshua Committee for knocking down walls.

The idea of the Circle of Friends was a virulent virus – that travelled the world and infected families and friends by the hundreds of thousands. Not bad for someone who has been “officially dead for 35 years.”

We will of course miss Judith’s physical presence, but you also need to know that her new state is both a blessing and a curse. Whenever you need mentoring, Judith can be there. All you need to do is listen. And she will whisper or shout in your ear – depending on her wisdom and her whim. This new service is free – and available to anyone, anywhere, anytime. What a gift she has given us. But of course, with Judith – it always has a catch.

She KNOWS how much work there is to do HERE.. so she is not letting us off the hook. In fact, she just ‘graduated us all’ into full fledged organizers with a life long assignment. She has been mentoring us all – how to listen – and how to act. She has unleashed her own private ‘Finishing school for Mama’s boys and girl’s – over 600 strong – as graduates of the Judith School of ‘Faster, faster – feed me – and LISTEN. Now we are all ‘hooked’ on Judith’s commitments to inclusion, justice and peace.

In that spirit, Judith told me to remind us all that this week, Justice Murray Sinclair delivered the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. Justice Sinclair said: "Words are not enough," to address the "cultural genocide" of residential schools on aboriginal communities. "Reconciliation is not an aboriginal problem — it is a Canadian problem. It involves all of us."

And so Judith – in her finest form – is posing yet another challenge.. Will we have the courage to act – to begin new conversations as co-equals – that will bring the real healing – and ultimately create a society of mutuality where **ALL are Welcome** – all colors, all ethnicities, all religions, all sexes, all abilities – ALL! No exceptions.

These are the conversations Judith has been coaching us on for four decades – and still there is much work to do..

We thank you Judith for the memories, for the coaching, and for this challenge. And so let the work here begin – and the welcoming party upstairs continue.