

Dear Friends and Family, Sept. 1989

Where we are at and where we are going.

The past 18 months of our lives have been among the most intense we've ever experienced. Life has truly been a roller coaster of hills and valleys too numerous to list. Since February 1988 until today (Sept. 1989) there have been a series of crises that would have shaken and burned out many. We are shaken but not burned out. We have not broken down but broken through new walls and new feelings. We have emerged tired but stronger and wiser. Jack and I stand together in the way only struggle forges people together.

First there was Ida's illness and her subsequent arrival in Toronto in Feb. 1988. Then the discovery of Marsha's early breast cancer in May 1988, the lumpectomy and incredible recovery. in June 1988. There was also Judith Snow's wait for surgery on her hips and her slow but steady recovery. The 1988 McGill Summer Institute was a reprieve from personal pain, fear and loss. Judith's wedding in July was a celebration of life that was appropriate to the time.

Jack in the meantime was dealing not only with his reaction to Ida's coming to Toronto and Marsha's scare with breast cancer, but also with an ever increasing tide of craziness from both the HELP and BEAT THE STREET programs at Frontier. Dealing with hurt, abused, addicted people is harder than we had imagined and HELP was building to a crescendo that is just now starting to abate.

Frontier was in the meantime becoming a focal point for the literacy movement with the Prime Minister making his national literacy policy announcement at the College on Sept. 8, 1988. Funding was announced for our new READ CANADA Program, and there was growth and excitement in the whole field of literacy for the first time in decades.

Another breakthrough was the emergence of corporate interest in Frontier and the literacy issue. Several started to come on board. And in the midst of this growth, HELP continued to be a thorn in Jack's side. The leadership in HELP just couldn't seem to come out of the "prison walls" and continually threatened and harassed their own and the Frontier staff. Loose threats were constantly made as a dangerous game of "cops and robbers" played itself out.

Jack was the "Square John" caught in the middle and trying to pull it all together. There were very few people with the background, the skill or the sentiment to help out. This was both his strength and his need -- to get others involved and to stop protecting those who were the victims of their own circumstances. Understanding how people got in trouble in the first place is necessary, but in spite of the damage done over the years, when they get a chance to make it, they cannot be allowed to get ahead by hurting others.

The craziness went through severe peaks and valleys. It included three rounds of death threats to Jack which we had to take very seriously. However, we thought everything was finally cooling down when it came to a screaming climax the first week of this August. Pat Young (wife of Bob Young - the former director of the HELP program) committed suicide in Kingston. By August 8, Bob, crazed with grief and rage, started sending out serious death threats to and for Jack via the HELP and other networks.

Bob, who viewed Frontier, HELP and Jack as the cause of Pat's death, was irrational and out of control. Jack and I consulted with many, and then decided to disappear for two weeks while things cooled down. With a portable fax machine, his computer and a phone, Jack set up an office out of town. He never once broke his stride.

Tom French, another ex HELP director then started playing his games to get back into power and more threats from who knows what sources appeared on the horizon. This was getting annoying to say the least.

Jack finally reached out, asked for help and got it from a variety of sources. In the first few rounds of this tension, Tracy LeQuere had been Jack's backup. But, we knew it was serious because even Tracy, (in retrospect not surprisingly) really burned out from the pressure. He is taking a sick leave of absence to regain his equilibrium.

However, Jack's Frontier team pulled together to stand firm on not allowing hoodlums and manipulating male macho arrogant addicted children to run our lives and to ruin Frontier College. (a touch of anger perhaps?)

After an emotional up and down ride, Jack and I both decided to stand firm and not allow these threats to run our life. We both decided we'd take precautions, but stand tall and fight back.

At the Frontier College Annual Meeting last week, Sept. 16, 1989, Jack gave the speech of his life. He was eloquent and powerful in his determination to keep running Frontier, to keep helping ex-offenders and street people, while at the same time bringing in some new actors to help keep these difficult programs running.

We'll send Jack's speech along as soon as its printed. We also have it on video.

Marsha, in the meantime, started the Centre for Integrated Education and Community which is now an independent non-profit corporation fromally affiliated with and based in Frontier College. She continued to speak all over North America on the topic of integration. Never before was it so clear why prisons are not the answer and why kids must be in caring homes and caring schools. The disease of HELP is the disease of men and women who have been unloved and poor all their lives.

And in the middle of it all, Marsha managed to raise \$150,000 from Imperial Oil to operate the Centre for three years. \$50,000 a year will keep us afloat and I am thrilled with this initial fundraising effort.

I too am more determined than ever to fight back against a system which created the men and women of HELP and BEAT THE STREET. I've reaffirmed my commitment to assist in any small way to build a world where exploitation, greed and profit are not at the root of all thinking and being.

Instead of being depressed, both of us are angry that the Bob Young's of the world never had a family - and now we have to pay the price. We are determined to do our part to make this a more just and secure world. But we need to stop for awhile and breathe and read and write. It has been a little stressful.

I am exhausted from all the ups and down of this past 18 months and I look forward to our trip to Asia after the TASH conference in San Francisco. We leave for California on Dec. 6 and then head for Bangkok on Dec. 10th. WHOOPEE.

I am giving the TASH keynote to approxiamtely 4000 delegates.. I have a nightmare that I will get up, see all those faces and faint. Actually I am quite excited about this experience. Giving the TASH keynote is a formal acknowledgement from my own colleagues for my work. It is a triumph and I feel good about it. Additionally, I am receiving the President's Award from the Canadian Association for Community Living. Ironically, they did

everything they could to get rid of me two years ago, but I stood on principle. Now, mainly because of the TASH award, they have been embarrassed into acknowledging me. It is ironic how things come around!

On our India adventure, we'll have 4 weeks traveling with Phil and Jenny and then Jack attends a 2 week International Adult Education Conference in Bangkok and I am planning to take a one week Thai cooking course and going to visit Phil's family in Malaysia for a week. Practically, this will be Phil and Jenny's honeymoon. They got married Sept. 9. at the College. This is the third College wedding this year. And Jack was the photographer - again. Another one of his many talents.

The absolute best thing that has happened these past 18 months is our SCHOOLHOUSE. Located at a secret spot that we plan to tell no one about, it is perfect and beautiful and sits across the street from a river. I am up here alone for a few days trying to catch up on all the work I haven't done for several weeks. I am writing and hiding from all people

Each night the leaves are painted marvelous colours by a band of gremlins who come out around 2 a.m. with cans of autumn colours. It is truly breathtaking. I am writing and baking and enjoying the first taste of solitude I've had in a long long time.

Much of what happened was indeed out of our control and that was what was so frustrating. But we are gaining an understanding of what happened and we are moving on without cynicism and without despair.

We are dealing with the real problems that face society today. It is hard not to be angry at individuals within the HELP program because they "had it made" and then screwed it up. But at the same time, we don't blame victims and understand that a society that doesn't provide a basic human survival kit - a family, a decent income, a secure job and a home - that society makes such things happen. It is amazing that we can spend billions on arms, and \$500,000,000 on the Skydome for sports - and finish it on time - but we can't find the time and energy to give children families. It says volumes about our values.

The high school kids I work with would call this past 18 months "awesome". We certainly experienced and learned a great deal both about ourselves and our society. We saw how incredible our circle of friends really is and we saw too much pain among those we work with. We both want to write and reflect on these experiences and help others from what we've learned.

Our lives have been threatened and we have come out appreciating each day more, and appreciating the love we share more. Shaunee has weathered all of these storms with us. She is sitting and snoring by my side right now. She will be 11 this Fall and has truly been a friend that we treasure.

To all of you who helped us these past months we can only say **THANK you.**

Your friendship is a treasure. We truly appreciate your solidarity and assistance. Several of you gave us the courage and understanding to take a stand on principle and move ahead. In a time when clear thinking is at a premium, we are more than thankful for ~~the~~ time people took to talk to us and to help us

We look forward to helping create a future where the events we just experienced will never have to happen to anyone, and where all children and adults will be welcomed into loving and caring homes and communities - where they can become part of - not apart from - the mainstream of life.

I've been baking a lot up here at the schoolhouse - making bread and jam is a healing (and delicious) experience. I've decided life is similar to the jam I am cooking:

J -- life is full of joy
A --life is full of anguish
M--life is full of marvel

I have just taken a stroll at dusk with Shaunee and am awaiting Jack's arrival at the schoolhouse. I picked a variety of gorgeous fall wildflowers which decorate the rooms here with their natural beauty. I know we can't go back to where we were yesterday and I am confident that will we move into tomorrow together and stronger than ever *with a little help from our friends.*

With love,

MARSHA FOREST from The Schoolhouse.

Sept. 1989

As you can all see, Marsha has mastered the MAC. (Macintosh computer). This was a "gift" for me, but I haven't had time to play - and now Marsha has seconded it. My instructions are to add a "bit". I just read this and it is a tough act to follow. We will copy the speech I gave which says a lot about where I am at. And I am here for a weekend - that's two in a row.

There is no question that we are a bit tired - and that this schoolhouse is a spectacular refuge to heal the raw spots. We both need that right now. But amazingly, other than the fact that we both want to write and reflect on this, little else has changed. We are more determined - not less. If anything, I feel that I have a responsibility to try and help others to understand what we have lived through - so that fewer mistakes can be made - and fewer crazed people are discarded by our society.

And right now, I am going to go for a little canoe ride. The gremlins have indeed been out and spashed splotches of red and orange most everywhere. It is a fairyland. And it is quiet. We love it.

And so, my wee note ends. Many of you have been part of getting us here in one piece (literally?), many of you may not know how important you have been, but let me reiterate Marsha's thank you. It is wonderful to have friends like you.

Jack