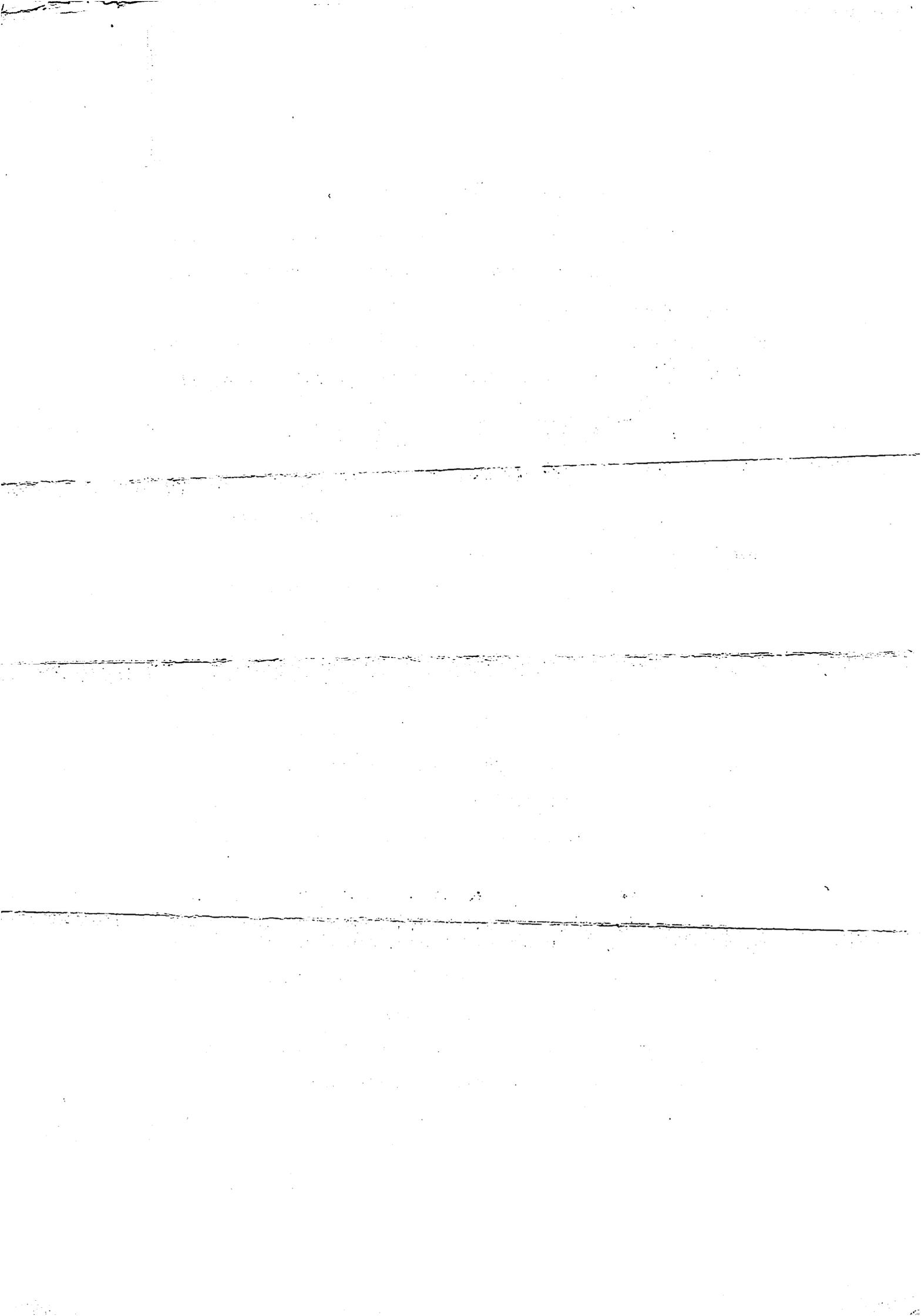


Gerv Leyden: The Man of Many Hats

Nearly three decades ago, there was a knock at our door on a crisp Saturday morning. In my bathrobe, I met man in running sweats. He was on a mission – somewhat like Don Quixote, searching for ‘the truth’ about inclusion. He was lost and looking for the headquarters of a huge Canadian Firm that was doing advocacy about a new kind of schooling that could welcome all children into the world of learning together - with no exclusions. He was looking for **Inclusion Towers**.

Over many cups of coffee, Marsha Forest, my wife and partner revealed that our humble house was indeed the place he was searching for - the home of Inclusion Press -- but unabashedly without glittering towers. That first meeting is a wonderful metaphor for Gerv’s relentless search for ‘a better way’ for all children. He saw the hidden treasures in every child, and had a life long obsession to free and share those talents. Like Robin Hood before him, he found treasures and then shared them with wisdom, enthusiasm, delight – and often a song. He even ran the NY Marathon dressed as Robin Hood. This journey became the foundation of a friendship and partnership that continues today.

Dr. Leyden was a man of enormous talent and effusive generosity. He had a hat and a song for every occasion. He was humble to a fault – except when presented with an opportunity to sing or wear another hat – or to advocate for a child who was experiencing exclusion. You see, Gerv was rejected from the academic stream in school; and destined to be a bricklayer. Fortunately for us all, his personal brilliance and



incredible determination conquered that adversity. But it was a gift to Gerv because he understood the devastation of rejection from his very bone marrow. That experience in fact shaped his life and career, bushwacking his way through academe to open doors for children destined for the discard bin. He was indeed a man of the people: there was not a pretentious bone in his body.

Thus, it was a proud moment when the childhood football ruffian was finally acknowledged with a richly deserved Phd. Among other honours, he also received the less well known **Rose Quartz Warrior Award** from the Marsha Forest Centre. When Marsha passed in 2000, we created this award to honour those quiet **relentless warriors for inclusion** – who did the heavy lifting – with incredible humility. Gerv was such a warrior. His principled teaching and leadership engineered seismic shifts in the world of the British Psychological Society – and through his advocacy with that association, and through his students directly – the lives of countless thousands of children and families have been dramatically enhanced. So many who would have been ‘missed’ are growing to be full and contributing citizens.

This deep wisdom was also shared at Toronto Summer Institutes for a over a decade where Gerv gently nurtured new teachers and students into a deeper understanding that inclusion was not just a word – but a life commitment. He shared that passion with many, in particular Jim Hanson and Gary Bunch who became friends and compatriots over the years.

And then there is **another Gerv** – it is one word: **Gerv’nSue**. When Lynda and I decided to get married and wanted a non-North American location, **Gerv’nSue** became wedding planners extraordinaire. Although we almost went to Gretna Green, with their creative genius, we were wed in Newstead Abby – Gerv sang, Sue read – It was a glorious day together.

Gerv’nSue were also our travel buddies: We spent many nights by the fire, eating, drinking and planning – then off hiking to Cum Cul, Ofas Dike, sampling wines in Paris; tangenes in Morocco, flamenco dancers in Spain, and countless National Trust estates where a ‘muffin & tea’ were often supplemented by a song, and on occasion – special dress!

And with **Gerv’nSue** – we challenged the limits of hospitality, but leaning on their love of youth, we brought our daughters and neice. They too were welcomed, and fed, and toured and entertained. Gerv played Mr. Dressup, gave cricket lessons on the lawn, singing lessons by the piano and accordion serenades - even without a special occasion. **Gerv’nSue** have been our home away from home.

Gerv did not choose the popular easy road, which is why he was discovered in Toronto, on that fateful morning – searching for the illusionary Inclusion Towers. But we shared that passion and thus a life long friendship/partnership flourished. This work not done, there are miles to go, but THIS Warrior for Inclusion has enabled fuller lives for untold thousands of children, so now he can rest, and sing, and jog, watching the remarkable lives that are unfolding because of his work. Take your rest dear friend – rest.