

Subj: Not ignoring you
Date: Wednesday, August 8, 2001 2:07:22 PM
From: judiths@ica.net
To: jlmabcd@aol.com

Well, not exactly ignoring you. As usual I'm over committed, having fun and not writing enough! I do have some pages done, and will include them here. Actually I have over forty but these are fresh!!!

William sends his regrets re not meeting up with us during the Institute.

I "graduated" to a new level of training at Landmark -- one step closer to being a Landmark Forum Leader. Yipee!

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Landmark

Currently, I am in the Introduction Leaders Program offered by Landmark Education Corporation in Toronto with four weekends in New York City. It's intensive, intrusive and confronts me on several levels. One is the time demanded of us to fulfill the integrity of the program. Typically I spend 20 hours a week on Landmark work and often much more. Another confrontation is the money, although to be truthful, I can see where Landmark isn't truly to blame for the fact that my income is down this year. There was no tuition for ILP but it costs a lot to go to New York, and I haven't focused enough on generating income this year.

The truly interesting confrontation is quite personal. ILP promises to strip away everything which prevents me from being the leader I am capable of being. Early along these issues were things like making enough requests of

others that I could get done the things I said I would do. Three quarters of the way through the program it looks very different. I am coming face-to-face with my anger, my putting myself down, my unwillingness to be a leader and my need for a crisis to overcome my general lack of energy and focus.

It occurred today that I haven't talked about the part that Landmark has played in my life, even though it has been an integral piece for most of eleven years. It's almost like I hold Landmark like a damaged child, or an illicit lover that I pretend no one knows about and that I hide in public situations. People that I know through Landmark know very little about my life as an Inclusion advocate and people from my home and Inclusion life are often quite separate from Landmark. Perhaps it is time I acknowledged the two great loves in my life -- each to each other.

My first encounter with Landmark Education Corporation started innocently. I

had no idea, really, what I was getting into. It was 1990 and Marsha and Jack were invited by Dr. Yves Talbot to take a course called Communication -- Access to Power. Yves was an important connection to Marsha and Jack as

he had a teaching position with the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. From 1986 to 1992 we taught a seminar with first year medical students where we introduced them to people leading lifestyles considered outside the norm. Our intention was to give the students a perspective on the power they would shortly yield to support or limit diversity in community. I believe also that back in 1990 Marsha and Jack were courting Yves, hoping to get greater access to working in the Faculty of Medicine -- a hope that never gave greater fruit.

At this point in my relationship I was blissfully unaware of most of the agendas that affected the Marsha and Jack's decisions. I merely noticed that they were taking a course, and I asked if I could take it with them. It seemed like a good chance to spend a few days with them.

My relationship with Landmark started out in a very rocky manner. Landmark is clear that their courses are not therapeutic in nature. They make it

clear that participants may be confronted by issues raised in their courses, and that participants need to be responsible for their own well being. The registration form to the CAP course listed several questions about my therapeutic history. I answered them honestly, if somewhat uneasily, since I have a history stretching back to my early teens of relationships with psychotherapeutic professionals -- what labeled individual doesn't? I felt that I was quite capable of affirming that I was well and able to take the course.

I was shaken and distressed to receive the news and have a conversation with the Registration Manager that she was refusing my registration on the grounds that I likely could not withstand the rigors of the course. Apparently she thought that my physical limitations were equivalent to the psychological vulnerabilities that Landmark does not want to mess with. After discussing it with Marsha I phoned Yves Talbot, (who was also my family doctor), and he cleared it up with the Registration Manager. My participation was permitted!

Later, the same woman would become my valued teacher and mentor. She admitted that she had been stereotyping me. Just the same it was a rather naked experience of the sort of social inaccessibility that confronts me and other labeled people frequently. Generally I conducted my life, and still do, in a way that avoids such obvious exposure to negative attitudes and barriers. Then, and now, accepting Landmark's invitations caused open confrontation with stuff I like to pretend isn't there.

The CAP course started on a Friday evening. For the entire week before that - Sunday evening to Friday afternoon, I was at a campground near London, Ontario, leading and participating in a conference called Flying On My Own. We were a gathering of about forty people who used or wanted to use personal assistance. Most of us were known 3mouthy crips2 -- people who had been pushing for every possible break in a service system that generally kept our lives limited and segregated.

I was a conference organizer and a leading spokesperson. My voice and leadership were well known and respected in this group. As the first person

in Canada to get individualized funding for personal assistance, I was a source of inspiration, hope and motivation for other activists who resented and were fighting against the limitations imposed by society.

We were conducting a conference format designed to help us work out the policy framework we thought would best support the province-wide provision of personal assistance. We were adamant that this support should be

controlled by the people who needed the support so that we could become and remain fully participating citizens in our own communities.

The work was fun and envigourating. The results -- both in terms of policy we generated and working relationships we built -- were powerful and full of promise. The week at Woodeden Camp intensive in every way.

Landmark recommended that CAP course participants arrive well rested. I was certainly on a high and feeling hopeful and energized but I was anything but well rested. I was also in a very different place than Jack and Marsha. I was enthusiastic about what lay ahead. They seemed reserved about their participation.

I remember very little about the course itself. I remember the course leader - Terry St. Pierre. She was vivacious and sharp, and was also managing her energy due to the pain from her rheumatoid arthritis. I remember her relating the value of making unreasonable requests. She had just acquired a brand new free computer through such conversations.

I was alert and engaged throughout the entire weekend, and on to the final, Thursday session I brought twelve guests to share my excitement and to look at taking the course too. I recall that neither Marsha nor Jack shared my enthusiasm. In fact I don't believe they completed the course. None of my twelve guests registered into a Landmark course that night. Some of my friends clearly wondered just what I was getting myself into. It was the beginning for me of a sense that it was best that I keep Landmark as a concern separate from my Inclusion world. Landmark became like a private hobby for me.

Why did I have such a great time? Of course, part of it was that I always am attracted to anything that promises me an answer. I was the one that had been a Jehovah's Witness for five years! The Landmark curriculum certainly seemed like an answer at the time. The CAP course laid out a clear analysis and some strategies for bringing more power to life. These approaches were challenging and engaging to implement. I felt like a fish that had found the perfect pond.

It has never remained clear to me just what I learned in CAP but the benefits to me were quickly obvious. Some weeks after CAP, I recognized that something extraordinary had emerged for me out of my participation in the course.

My belief that support circles are one of the best ways for people who are labeled disabled to live full lives as citizens had been there since 1980. I worked to get lots of people to build a circle around themselves or their loved one. But I faced the reluctance of other circle originators to share this model. They feared that somehow the power of support circles would be destroyed if it were shared too publically. I believe that, unknowingly, I carried their sense of reluctance with me when I spoke to others. In any case very few people started a circle after listening to me and my story.

After CAP a whole lot of people started to build support circles based on my experience. In fact I travelled to England about three weeks after CAP and at least six families that I spoke to in the UK immediately started a circle in their own lives. I am certain that I had developed new power to explain myself and my ideas, and to engage others as a result of my participation in the Landmark's Communication - Access to Power.

In CAP I was told that an important course given by Landmark Education was the Forum. I heard that the Forum had been created to replace EST work.

EST was the creation of Werner Erhart. EST courses had been a physically grueling experience designed to acquaint you with your own humanity. EST courses had been retired in 1985 and the Forum launched in its stead. The Forum is reputed to be much gentler but perhaps even more effective at engaging a person in the discovery of what it takes to powerfully lead a

life they love.

I was intensely curious about the Forum, figuring that if Landmark could put me on the road of being a master circle builder I wanted to know as much as I could about what they had to offer. In October 1990 I participated in the Forum.

Again I remember very little about what actually happened in the room, but it was amazing and it was fun! At least a hundred people participated and it took place in a huge room where another hundred people could have been jammed in. In order to get into this cavern I had to make a bridge with my portable ramps from my van to a disused loading dock at the side of the building. I undertook these treacherous acts of entering and exiting at least twice each day. Just the same from very early on the first morning nothing could have stopped me from participating.

On the Monday between the weekend section of the Forum and the completion evening on Tuesday I had lunch with my personal assistant, Savoy. We talked and talked -- I shared myself openly in a blissful sense of freedom. We talked so long, heedless of the passage of time, that we emerged from the restaurant to discover my van had been towed away. I had parked in a 4 - 6 No Parking zone and it was after 4!

What might have been a source of annoyance, anger and upset was to me that day almost amusing -- fate's paltry attempt to shake my new confidence in the universe and myself. Savoy went off to pay the fine and retrieve the van. I started off in my motorized wheelchair to roll to the meeting that I was already late for.

The meeting was being held about five blocks away from the restaurant. Along the way I began to notice how many other people were going about their day on wheels -- people on roller blades, on scooters, in strollers, on bicycles and motorcycles, and, of course car after car after car. It struck me very deeply how much people love to get about on wheels, and here I was wheeling along like so many others. I felt that I belonged in the world -- in a way I

had never felt before -- a way that revealed just how much I had felt I didn't belong for most of my life.

I arrived at my meeting when there was just five minutes left until the time to go home. It seemed that nothing on the agenda had been accomplished. Within those last five minutes we got ourselves organized, got our tasks done and created the next round of activities. The power in my presence and my words was enough to pull people together into a mighty, effective team. I was on fire!

In the same week I made a commitment to Savoy that my home was her home for as long as she wanted it to be. She moved in with me about a month later. A few years later we both joined the start-up Board of Directors for a housing cooperative that was built in our neighbourhood. We both moved into the new building and lived in separate apartments on the same floor. About three years later I bought a house and moved out. Savoy remains in the co-op. We continue to be very close friends. I am certain that I would never have committed myself to offering my home to Savoy if it hadn't been for the Forum. I would not have risked opening my heart to someone in that way before. I would have missed out on more than a decade of beautiful, unbelievable friendship.

That same year, 1990, Jack Pearpoint completed a book about how I had changed his life, my breakout from a life of disability² and how he, Marsha and I, along with others, were building the Inclusion movement. It is called *From Behind the Piano*², and it has been reissued four or five times.

Jack's vision of my life is somewhat different from my own, but many of my words are recorded in that book. I believe that the breakthroughs in communication and self respect that I experienced through the CAP course and the Forum helped me to get my thoughts and experience out in print.

After CAP and the Forum I participated in two or three of the seminars, and in the Advanced Course. The seminars took place one evening a week over a three month time period. What I enjoyed most about them was that I actually got to learn what the *3distinctions*² were that were presented in the Forum.

Although the Forum had moved and challenged me, giving me a new sense of freedom, I couldn't consciously remember much of what had actually happened in those intense three days. In the seminars we reviewed and discussed each distinction, one at a time. We had exercises to practice in class and homework to root the learnings in our daily lives.

Words like integrity, responsibility and commitment were familiar to me from my deep engagement with Christianity in my childhood and youth. They took on new meanings and power as Landmark gave us a fresh look at them. Other words like relationship, intimacy and acknowledgement were more confronting to me. It took me many years to face my reluctance to transform at an emotional level. Just the same Landmark held a beacon of promise for me that never entirely faded from my awareness even when I acted as if nothing of importance was going on.
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