

OVER 45 AND STILL ALIVE (AND KICKING)!!!

MY JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION : WHEN YOU DREAM-DREAM BIG

I am currently sitting in a magical old Ontario one room schoolhouse wearing a large pink tee shirt that says "WHEN YOU DREAM-DREAM BIG. I also have on comfortable and old baggy magenta coloured pants and lively purple socks. I'm sure I'm quite a sight but to the two people closest to me at this very moment in time [Jack (a human) and Shaunee (a dog)] they think I look great. What matters most however is that I think I look great!

The varied and wondrous tapestry of spring greens are verdant outside my big picture window and the remnants of a short lilac bush peek out from behind the larger trees. The Madawaska River is still tonight at 7:43 PM. It is silent outside except for the buzz of millions and trillions of black flies which attack me the second I step off the little schoolhouse porch. When the black flies rest ,then thousands of mosquitoes zoom in .-- It is early June I even love the flies and mosquitoes tonight.

After two incredibly challenging years I am finally comfortable and at home again, physically, mentally and spiritually . I once again believe I have a future. I have no idea of what that future will look like at the moment but I am secure enough to let it come without the horrible and terrifying anxiety I have felt in the past two years.

This is a new feeling - a nice feeling and I am enjoying it, along with the spring greens, the lilacs in bloom and the trillions of black flies.

I was not ready to write this before tonight. The memories of the past were too raw, too open, too sore. But I believe I have something important and real to say, particularly to women, and particularly to women of my generation.

I will be 48 years old on August 10, 1990. I was born in 1942. The blueprint of my life was not supposed to include me sitting in a one

room schoolhouse in Northern Ontario, wearing baggy magenta pants, lively purple socks and staring at the spring greens and lilacs.

I was, according to the 1942 life script, supposed at this time of my life to be sitting somewhere in either New York City, Long Island, or the East Coast of Florida, watching my grandchildren, taking them on outings, and being always ready to assist at any hour of the day or night,- my doctor, dentist, accountant, or lawyer husband .

But alas and alack -- there are no grandchildren -- only an 11 year old labrador retriever who snores and farts intermittently, and a 44 year old best friend and husband who professionally fits no known description. He has just left an incredibly awesome 15 years as the President of Canada's Frontier College, to search for a new road as a writer, speaker and helper of organizations and people in trouble.

I am, to all who lead a so called normal and routinized lifestyle, a total bust as the perfect Jewish daughter/wife/mother. However, I wouldn't trade one day of my life (well maybe one or two) for any other and I enjoy being exactly where I am and who I am.

Women of my age hardly have any role models to show them new direction and new roads as they reach from their 40's to their 80's. Where are the fifty year old women mountain climbers, adventurers, travelers, workers. All I see around me in the media or on T.V etc. are women who are either superstars with gizillions of dollars, or strange or sad bag ladies with tales of falling from grace. Where are the ordinary women of 50 who are doing what they want with their ordinary lives ,and not exploiting or hurting anyone in the process?

Self help books abound for women abound to "help yourself get what you want." .But these books seem to imply that there must be winners and losers. If you don't have or get what you want, you are a total loss as a person--a real loser. These books don't seem to take into account that most of us don't have rich fathers or rich husbands or for that matter any husbands at all Most of us don't win lotteries or write best selling books. Most of us don't want to get rich, we just want to have a meaningful and satisfying life.

Other pop psychology texts imply that if you don't find peace in GOD or some other Eastern religion, you will, in addition to burning in hell, be a boring, meaningless person.

My story/book/poem/parable/ whatever, is for ordinary women and for my friends who don't aim to be rich or famous, but simply want to have meaningful ,exciting, and fulfilled lives without guilt, shame, remorse or anxiety. It is for all those out there who long to be accepted as they are -- wearing a pink tee shirt, magenta baggy pants and lovely purple socks. It is for all those women over 45 who really want to DREAM BIG but who have been blocked, stopped and hurt by their husbands, their children, their parents, their society,,and often by themselves.

This story/book/poem/parable/whatever, is for women who are wives, mothers, daughters, friends, workers, lovers, and dreamers who simply want to have enough money and time to look at the lilacs and listen to the black flies . It is for me and others who dreamed in secret of visiting Kathmandu and Bombay, and who want for the second 50 years of their lives to be free of the demons and dragons that drove them crazy the first fifty years.

This book is for all of us who survived up to now and who plan to live the second half of our lives with more wisdom, more chutzpah and less guilt than the first fifty years.

I figure I truly lived and learned fully the first 50 years. of my life. I can't wait to see this next 50.! That's my attitude and I hope it can be yours too. I am tired of meeting women my age who feel they are 99 and waiting to die. It scares me.

I know Barbara Streisand and Jane Fonda are fifty, gorgeous, rich and thin, but most of the women I work and hangout with are not glamour queens, they are not rich or thin , nor is that their aspiration. They and I do want to be seen as adventurers, exciting, sexy, terrific, bright, lively and on the verge of the new, not on the brink of the old, or death.

I didn't feel this way two years ago.I lost some of my zest and energy, but I got it back double-fold. I want to share my renewed energy and enthusiasm with anyone who cares to read this.

I survived breast cancer, two divorces, momentous family crisis, infertility and uncomfortable job changes because I always managed to see life as a glass half full ,not half empty. All the events of my first 47 years have finally led me to Jack, to our home in Toronto

and to our schoolhouse .In February, 1990, they led me to my dream of traveling to Kathmandu, trekking in the Annapurna Range of the Himalayas ,and being in India.

What's your secret dream? Do you dare to say it or write it down. If this little book/story/poem/whatever, can in any way empower me and /or you to reach deeper into your heart and soul, to share your secret dreams, and then live on those dreams, I will be thrilled!!

Stop right now.

Take out two pieces of paper. On one sheet write MY DREAM - then write down in a few sentences your real hearts desire. In 1976 I dared to do this. I was a mess. Marriage #2 was disintegrating and I wrote down the following:
I WANT A HOME, A REAL HUSBAND WHO IS AROUND, TO COOK A LOT, A GREAT JOB, A CHILD, A DOG, TO LIVE IN TORONTO.

Just writing this down in 1976, clarified how miserable I was. One year later I was en route to my dream. It took a lot of work, blood sweat and too many tears , but it was well worth it. Real change of any kind starts with articulating a dream. It helps if you have someone to share that dream with who won't tell you , "It's unrealistic.!" Find a friend who will listen. If you can't find a friend who will really and truly listen ,maybe that's a clue to your first dream.

On the second sheet of paper write MY DREAM but this time draw it. I remember doing this and drawing a house, children, a pet, a husband, friends, flowers, trees -- it took years to achieve this dream and some of it did not happen in the way I had planned, but the dream gave me clarification on what I really wanted. At that time in 1976, I didn't dream of going to Kathmandu or Bombay, I simply wanted to get to Toronto from a place an hour and a half away. It seemed impossible then, but it happened.

Dare to dream ,but be careful to dream what you really really want, because you just might get it.

THIS IS THE HARD PART TO WRITE

I remember it well. In March, 1988, I started receiving frantic phone calls from a variety of family members who lived in Florida near my mother. Since my Aunt Rose had taken sick and left for New York, my mother was alone and lonely in her Florida apartment, although surrounded by many aunts and cousins. The long standing relationship of over fifty years between my mother and Aunt Rose, had come to an abrupt end. My mother couldn't face the loneliness. I understood and felt sorrow for my mother's predicament, but there seemed to be no way out of this situation.

My life style did not lend itself to my mother living with us nor did she want to leave Florida to come to frigid Canada. I was the only person she knew in Toronto. We all agreed it was a lousy alternative.

My mother moved from the apartment she had shared with Aunt Rose, to the Florida Club, a senior citizens residence which she pretended to like and which I totally hated. It was tucked away somewhere in the middle of nowhere, about 45 minutes from Miami. Physically the place was fine with lovely one bedroom units, a gorgeous dining room, swimming pool, etc. It was for lonely alone old people.

I wished with all my heart that my mother could be in the New York City area with all the family and near her beloved Rose but Rose was very ill and the family could not handle my mother in her super anxious and depressed mental state. Rose was steadily deteriorating from a series of strokes. It was a tragic separation for both women who had been friends and sister-in-laws since literally childhood.

Jack and I visited Florida at least twice a year and I would alternatively cry, scream, feel awful, sad, mad, and crazy during the visits. My mother was beginning to have depressions serious enough to hospitalize her twice. I would visit at the hospital and then drive alone to run on the beach, crying for the sadness of it all and knowing how little I could do.

The situation deteriorated rapidly and in January 1988 my mother was exhibiting strange hallucinatory behaviours and was diagnosed as having suffered a stroke. I had to do something drastic. Jack and

I decided that we had no choice but to move my mother to Toronto. I could not keep bouncing back and forth to Florida and I could not and would not allow my own mother to rot in a hospital or old age home without anyone to look after her.

I was to put it mildly --hysterical. The very thought of my mother coming to Toronto was, aside from the death of me or Jack, a nightmare beyond my wildest imagination. Since I was 19 years old and got married to get away from my family ,I had been running away from their control, especially my mother's control be it real or imaginary..

THE CONTEXT OF MY LIFE

This all has to be seen in context. My family was actually pretty good and very decent-- MINE was not a case of child abuse ,in fact I was an adored and loved only child. I was surrounded by a large and loving Jewish family who were just great as long as you did everything their way and thought and acted as they did.

I felt stifled by all this love and adoration I was the dreamer and fighter in the family .I wanted to climb mountains and see the larger world. My mother lived for me, her only child, her perfect daughter but as I got older and started to flee the nest, trouble started.

My father always secretly encouraged my dreams and told me to do as I wished. My mother gave me her all and provided the base and the marvelous foundation that I build upon today, but at 19 I wanted to leave home and see the world. Marriage was the only socially acceptable way out.

I married my college sweetheart and thus escaped New York at the age of nineteen.

My marriage at age nineteen, broke up my family in a strange way. I, who had been the secret glue of my parents not so perfect marriage, left and my father, not surprisingly had a massive stroke. He died one year later at the age of 59. My mother, at 57, was left totally alone, without much money, and without direction., a job or a role in life for herself. She was truly the victim of being a woman of her era and age.

She and my Aunt Rose (also a widow) wisely pooled their assets and bought a lovely apartment in Florida where they lived quite happily for over the next 20 years. When that arrangement finally fell apart, so did my mother physically, psychologically, and spiritually..

It was time for me to take action so I did. Jack and I explored Toronto options and found a lovely retirement lodge that provided nursing care It was literally 10 minutes from our house. The cost was exorbitant, but we figured we'd manage the finances later and split the costs with my mother if necessary.

I had the crazy notion that my mother would get magically cured in Toronto, and start to drive me crazy again. My fear was totally

unfounded, but it was very very real. I was in a state of unmitigated panic. I was sure my life as I knew it was over and that my worst nightmare was coming true -- my mother would come to Toronto and ruin my life.

Instead, I discovered that a frail, tragic little old snow white haired lonely woman, had come to Toronto and neither she nor anyone else had the power to ruin my life. Only I could do that. This was one of several lessons I was to learn in the next two years. This was simply the beginning of the end of my childhood and, with it, the end to the fears and fantasies I had carried with me into adult life.

A GUIDE ON THE JOURNEY

If you the reader get nothing else out of my story, it is that you can't do it alone. The IT is your life, with all its complexities. It is also unfair to ask any significant other (be that person male or female) to take the road of guide/therapist/counsellor. It is too much for one untrained human being to handle.

I was lucky and found Paul Levy. He has guided me gently, wisely, and patiently these past years into becoming the person I am today and into the person I will be tomorrow. In the summer before my mother took very ill she paid us her last real visit to Toronto. It was a major catastrophe!! It was how I connected with Paul.

My mother was, quite frankly, a total wreck. She was riddled with so much anxiety and depression that no one but me and Jack could be with her. She did not mean any harm (she never did) but her state of mind and body was so fragile that I thought we'd never get through the two week visit alive.

I knew Paul Levy as the father of a child I had recommended a terrific alternative school for several years before. Paul and I had met once or twice at the school and I felt comfortable enough to call and ask for his professional advice re my mother. Paul is a practicing psychiatrist and psychotherapist with a private practice located near our house. I think I must have begged as Paul agreed to see my mother. He continued to see her for the remainder of her two week visit.

Paul and I both decided that for my mother, long term therapy was neither possible nor desirable. The aim was to get me, Jack and my

mother through the two week visit. He attempted to give my terribly distraught mother some daily coping strategies because obviously driving everyone crazy was no fun for her either. Jack was patient and kind and always there as usual. He was supportive and understanding and also going crazy from my mother's behaviour. She and all of us were suffering and trying to get through the two weeks without collapsing.

When my mother left, Paul offered me a challenge I couldn't resist. He said, "Now that I know your mom a little better, it would be a great chance for you to explore yourself and your relationships with your family." I literally leapt at the chance to take this journey of exploration into myself. I had never studied me before. I had been an avid student of everything else. I loved learning and school and here was a new challenge --a chance to take a course in Marsha. I enthusiastically said "YES!!" It was to be one of the best decisions of my life.

The 'presenting problem' when I started my "lessons" with Paul was my relationship with my mother. Little did I know how serious this "problem" would become in the next months as my mother's condition deteriorated and she came to live in Toronto. I don't know how I would have coped without Paul's help and guidance. His model of caring and healing is something I am using today to model the small private practice. I am about to begin.

Paul was always there when I needed him. Once he commits himself to you as healer/ therapist/ guide, he takes that role very seriously. He has a closed practice and only takes on new patients/clients/students if he has time to give his full and complete energy. He doesn't constantly look at his watch and allows time for the unexpected insight to be explored.

I consider Paul Levy to be my second doctorate (maybe even more important than the first). Between Paul and Jack --one a guide the other a best friend, I got through the next two years with flying colours and can be sitting here tonight writing this without the anger, anguish, resentment, rage, guilt and fear I felt so often in those two years.

I COULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED ALONE AND WITHOUT HELP.

Help doesn't have to be a professional therapist -- it can be a friend or relative. Good friends or counsellors are hard to find, but they are out there and can be found if you look. I discovered the regularity of someone there just to listen to me and to be there for me was a godsend. I find it takes courage to ask for help make especially in a society that still values solving your problems alone.

My family ethic was that "psychiatrists make you crazy and make you hate your parents." My really healthy friends are the ones who seek out and find needed help. My friends who are deteriorating into their own obsessions and depressions are the ones who refuse to get the help, both medical and psychological, that they so desperately need.

WHO AM I

Paul helped me find out who I was and who I truly wanted to be. Here we now come to your second assignment.

Take out another piece of paper and write the date and time on it. Now put down WHO AM I ? Brainstorm with yourself a list of words and phrases that describe you. No words are right or wrong. Anything goes. In the next few days ask 3 people in your life to generate their list about you. See if any words match. Do others see you as you see yourself? What have you learned from these lists.?

All these exercises taken together will eventually form your **MAP** -- a MAP is simply a guide for determining the direction in your life. It will be your MAP drawn and written by you with "a little help from your friends". The first step was to dream and the second step to describe who you are.

With Paul I started to discover who I really was in all facets. Over the two years I realized I was many things to many people. I was most of all a mystery to myself. I found out I was great at being happy , joyful, loving and lousy at being sad, angry and confused. I didn't really know I could be all those things and that all feelings were OK and valuable.

I mostly discovered that I wanted to learn to FLY and that I found a flying instructor who didn't think I was silly or "unrealistic".. I didn't want to really learn to fly as in taking a plane up in the air -- I wanted to fly into life -- to take the leap off the precipice and not fall flat on my face and die. I had been quite afraid of dying for a long time -- it was life that I was afraid of.

I have conquered the fear of dying and am fully living as I hit 48. That's why I feel so young and full of energy these days. Worrying about dying is a real drag on your life. Do you worry about dying or spend time planning to live? I had a long list of dying fears including heart attack, stroke, cancer, accident, etc. When I wasn't busy dying I was worrying about Jack dying.

Write down your dying list.

It is therapeutic to write it down and laugh at the absurdity of the time we waste on dying when we could be dreaming of some great adventure we want to make happen.

Little did I know that both Jack and I were to face real death threats in the next two years that would take us to the brink of life or death....We chose life, and that as the Robert Frost poem says, "...that has made all the difference."

In my list of WHO AM I words, no one ever saw the sad, scared or fearful side of me. The list of words others wrote about me was like this:

Marsha is:

energetic,enthusiastic,smart.,loving,dynamic,outgoing,adventurous...

My own list included many of these words plus:

Marsha is -

anxious, scared, hyper at times, lonely, vulnerable, cut off, confused,alone..

Literally no one saw the "dark side" of me because I never let them see the whole of me. I didn't realize that till quite recently Now that I show all of me, my real friends have come closer, while some false friends have been scared away. I now experience more intimacy and closeness in my life.

I have always exposed the whole of me to Jack, but not to anyone else.. I saw this as a real strength. For example, when my young

first love marriage ended seven years after Roger and I married at the age of 19, not one of my friends or family knew. Till the day I left my home to go live alone in a new city no one knew that my marriage was over. I now see this as a terrible pattern of hiding the sad, mad and bad side of me.

I can't believe how well I hid the suffering and pain I went through as I lost the first love of my life and ended a marriage. It was the first event of its kind in the history of my family. I was mortified, embarrassed and ashamed that my marriage had "failed". I now know the marriage was a great first step on the road to a mature and lasting relationship.

I repeated the same pattern again when I left Jeff after a stormy yet illuminating second marriage. By this time I decided I had better take a look at myself and my relationships. In retrospect I now don't see either of these marriages as failures but rather as stepping stones to the life that I now share with Jack.

Most of my friends 'lived with' a series of mates. I kept getting married because in my family circle that was the socially acceptable thing to do.

I finally conquered social responsibility when I was 34 years old and decided to love and live with Jack several years before getting legally married .

I may be a slow learner but at least I learn.

As you can see I am unfolding a story as I go along. Without my telling you the story in sequence, you can start to pick up the threads and tapestry of my life.

MY HERSTORY

The HERSTORY is really the first step in the MAP of your life. It will unfold as you trust yourself and the people in your life. A story must have an audience To whom do you tell your story?. Can you tell it all?. What parts do you leave out? I find the more I can tell of my story the more others tell theirs

To recap my HERSTORY --

I was born the only child of a 36 and 38 year old couple who adored me as the perfect only child who entertained and kept their marriage together. I went everywhere with my parents and had an excellent education travelling and attending opera, theatre, concerts etc.

My father was a lawyer who loved his work. My mother, who had the energy , brains and talent to run General Motors put all her energy into me, thus driving both of us crazy. She was not satisfied as is typical of women of her age and social class. She thus made sure I had all the tools to be an independent woman. She gave me the wings to fly and then mourned that she had given them to me. She gave with one hand and took with the other, thus driving both of us crazy in the bargain.

My mother said it all. She often told me, "...as a person I think you are really terrific I truly respected you, your life and your work BUT, as a daughter you are a real disappointment."

I can understand that. My mother, Ida Snyderman, is the product of the women of her age . It is a tribute to both of us that today, we can sit together in silent communion, and forgive each other for what we did. At least we have both lived and learned enough to be able to forgive I have truly reached that point in my life..

Back to my story At twenty I got married, graduated from University and graduated into the Civil Rights Movement. My major work with children with disabilities has carried on for 25 years in one form or another Teaching has been the theme I became an educational advocate early and never sought or got tenured University positions as I was too much of a maverick (as I still am today.)

At 27 I got unmarried and then married again to Jeffrey Goodman, a fellow graduate student. Three years later both Jeffrey and I received our doctorates in education from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. . Seven years later I got unmarried again I stopped getting married for awhile before I entered into my next, final and most lasting relationship. I broke the pattern at last and started paying attention to what would take me into self-hurting phase of my life.

I have been active in political social movements since I was a teenager and have a strong sense of fighting against injustice of any kind. That has been a motivating factor in my life and work. All my relationships have involved a strong sense of social justice and working toward a more progressive and democratic society. I have been deeply influenced by people who are true revolutionaries on the world scene. I see my own personal growth not as an end in itself but as a way I can contribute more wisely and honestly toward creating a better world.

That's my story so far--more later.

A DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER

It is not surprising after hearing my HERSTORY that I have an interesting medical history. At the age of twenty I started fainting on the streets of New York and was diagnosed as being hyperthyroid. Years of treatment have left me with no thyroid and with my daily dose of eltroxin I am just fine.and plan to love and live a long life.

However this led to the sad fact that at 35 when I really wanted to have children, I found I was infertile (I really hate that label as I consider myself an incredibly fertile person).. After every known fertility test and drug , the doctors agreed that there was a hormonal or adrenal problem that could not be reversed. It was most likely linked to my age and my previous thyroid problems.

Not being able to have our own biological children was a disappointment to me and Jack We, as usual, did not treat this as a tragedy, but carried on and Sherry popped into our life. She was a fifteen year old who had been through the children's aid route and was about to head for the streets. She had applied to Frontier College for a summer job John O'Leary hired her and then sent her to our house till she could find a place to stay.

Sherry was the right person at the right time We adopted her (non-legally) and she, Jack, Shaunee and I formed a strange little family unit that has weather many storms but has come out just fine. Sherry is also the subject of another book.

By the time we survived living with a volatile and complex teenager,, Phil, another friend in need of a home, came to live with us. By the time Phil left home, we had no further "let's have a baby urges" We were quite satisfied with the full lives we were living. We knew we would give up something either way by having babies when we were in our early forties.

THE MEDICAL CRISIS

The real medical crisis of my life occurred in May, 1988, exactly 3 months to the date after my mother arrived in Toronto to live I was diagnosed with early or introductory breast cancer. Thanks to my friend and doctor Yves Talbot who ordered a routine mammogram, I am alive and well to tell this story.

After a 10 day glorious hiking and driving tour of the Big Sur California Coast, we returned to Toronto. I had my yearly check up and Mammogram and the next day got a call from the lab that something was wrong in my left breast.

Both Jack and I were devastated and totally terrified. That week-end was endless as we waited to see the cancer specialist, Dr. Irving Koven on Monday. Irv, as we now call him, sensed he was dealing with a super anxious patient and scheduled surgery immediately.

After my initial depression and terror I went into FIGHT mode. "Damn this," I thought, "I'm gonna get this sucker out of my body and never again will this happen to me!". It was my second AHA experience, my second real flash of lightening experience.

The first flash of lightening, which I literally remember to the day and hour, was when I met Jack. My marriage to Jeff was in trouble and I was invited to go on a three week tour of China with a group of Canadian educators in May 1976.

I decided to go and was terrified at the prospect. I guess I knew in my heart that if I stepped off the precipice and left Jeff even for three weeks, I would never return. I was right.

I met Jack at the orientation for the trip to China. From the moment I saw and spoke to Jack Pearpoint, we were like two magnets drawn together. His marriage was also on shaky ground and we spent the next three weeks together, never to be parted again.

Our two souls met and meshed on that plane to China as we shared our dreams, our stories and who we were. Little did we know we were developing MAPS even then.

Everything in me stopped that May day in 1976. I had stepped into another continent with 1 billion people who didn't look, think or act like we do in the West. China changed my world view and Jack changed my life. I felt good for the first time in years. I felt alive, young and full of energy as I charged around China with Jack and walked, ate, laughed and cried.

I consider May Day to a day tribute to workers of the world and to their eventual liberation. I also celebrate May Day 1976 as my birthday and anniversary of my new life. It was certainly the beginning of something powerful and healthy for me.

A dozen years later, I experienced the second major re-birth experience that came through my brush with breast cancer. I stared death and mortality right in the eye. And I told DEATH in no unlikely terms to "GET LOST!!!"

I went in and out of surgery like a charm. I decided to surround myself with love--loving people, loving thoughts, loving music, art etc. I visualized all the beauty that I had just seen in California. I found a massage therapist and went to Paul often. No more resentment, negativity, anger -- what I could control I would and what I couldn't I would try to get away from. This would prove to be a challenge in the coming months.

I made a decision that from the day of the mammogram forward, no matter what the diagnosis, I was going to live fully and surrounded by people who really loved me, not just the good list me but the whole list -- all of me, everything -- the good the bad and the ugly.

The day of the surgery I learned a technique of breathing so that immediately after the surgery I could do deep breathing and get the anesthetic out of my lungs fast. Jack was even more of a wreck than I was. I felt we were both going into surgery together. It was my body but both our lives were at stake.

I went into the surgery thinking of the beautiful blue and purple wild flowers of California and pretending the surgical table was my massage therapy table. Paul and my friend Pat Mackan, had been with me just before the surgery and filled me with positive and pleasant thoughts, prayers etc. I would let no one near me who was weepy, sappy or scared.

I came out of surgery, did my deep breathing and got to my room where Jack was awaiting me with his little bottle of rescue remedy, the BACH flower miracle bottle. He put several drops under my tongue, kissed me and looked at me as only he can do which is probably as healing as any flower, herbal or other remedy -- (but let's use it all)..I was dressed in a flash and totally cracked up as the internist told me his name. This is the truth. His name was DR.TITLEY. Everyone says laughter is healing. I had quite a laugh.

I got out of the hospital faster than you can imagine and home to my warm water bed, t.v. and Shaunee the healing dog. The next day Jack and I were on a plane to Denver, Colorado where we were both giving workshops at the Association for Retarded Citizens annual meeting.

I found out literally minutes before I was to give the ARC Keynote that I indeed had introductory breast cancer. Dr.Koven had done a lumpectomy and was certain all the cancer was gone.

All I heard was the dread word cancer. Somehow I managed to give an adequate speech and then went to my room and wept.. I was relieved and scared. Did they get it all?. Would I need radiation?.What were my chances for survival? Jack and I held each other tight and went for many walks and had many talks. We both knew then and there that I/we would really be OK. I knew I had to make some serious changes in my life and attitudes.

I am certain that the episode with my mother coming to Toronto and the terrible anxiety, resentment, fear, rage and terror that I felt well up in me was a trigger to the breast cancer. In Louise Hays book I

am the perfect prototype of both thyroid and breast cancer and I take her words very seriously. (expand)

I have changed my diet and I have changed my attitudes (even though I have been under the most incredible stress this past year from an episode I will describe later) I know the cancer will not occur again. I can no longer tolerate the kind of critical judgements from so-called friends who don't like me or want me in their lives I am who I am-- not perfect or marvelous -- simply human I must be respected as such.

I demand that respect now and don't allow people to take chunks of me for their own purposes. I will only work where I am truly wanted and I can get rid of resentments really fast I drink gallons of carrot juice and have cut out most caffeine and fats in my diet. Most of all I am learning to like /love myself as I am and to know deep in my heart that I am surrounded by love. I am still terrified of being the abandoned only child, but I know now that I am not a child. I trust my friends and loved ones will not abandon me at this time in my life.

The cancer is gone but the searing learning will remain with me forever. It was a warning -- it was a second chance to start again on a new footing. I need to grow and learn even more. I am fully in the school of life now and as I embark on this next phase of adventure I know I will be healthier in mind and spirit.

THE NIGHTMARE

I lived my worst nightmares and that is another of the MAP key questions. My nightmares were that my mother would have to live near me, that I would get sick and that Jack's life would be endangered. All three occurred within a two year period. I survived and lived through these nightmares. This knowledge of my strength and survival capacity gives me a new intensity and calm that I shall use in the coming years to help others, to build a better society and to help myself.

PART II REFLECTION ON WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

I learned an incredible amount in the last two years and I want to sum up my reflections of these learnings. I think others will often see themselves in someone else's experience. If you do see yourself and if this helps you in any way to make changes in your own life, I am really happy. Younger women do not have to repeat what we over forties went through. There are more options these days and more role models to learn from and with.

POINT 1

I learned not to judge my own feelings but to accept them all. There were times I am miserable, sad, mad, bad, blue, tired etc. and that is as good as happy, cheerful, friendly, nice, pleasant, clam etc.. All of these feelings are part of me and none of them deserves to be denied entry into my soul.

POINT 2

I learned that I had been the MOTHER to my mother all my life. I started to act like an adult and forced my mother to do the same, even when she was quite ill. It was the beginning of our finally meeting together as two adult women not as a mother-child, a child-mother, two children or two mothers.

I started to demand that both my mother and I act like mature women and when that happened we reached a new peace that we had never experienced before. This not so minor miracle is based on years of hard work.

POINT 3

No learning comes by doing it all alone or without very hard work. You can't be healed and healthy by wishing for it,. You need to do the same amount of work you would do in your job. or marriage to make your life work successfully.

POINT 4

I had been trapped for years in a myth of love - a love that was controlling , possessive and jealous. I kept marrying the men who fit that pattern as it was the only pattern I knew. I also knew that this pattern wasn't working, it was making me miserable and sick. I decided to change the pattern. It was a conscious choice to get help in going from the narrow and negative perspective on life that had surrounded me as a child and changing to a broader and more positive outlook that would make me a more productive, healthy and happy adult.

POINT 5

There is no way on earth to save unsatisfied miserable people who don't want to change. I had to give up playing GOD and accept that my mother was who she was--she didn't want to change therefore she wasn't going to change. But I wasn't my mother, aunts or cousins .I could change.So I did!

POINT 6

I faced the fact that for 34 years I had been disaffirmed and disapproved for who I really was .People close to me wanted to "eat up my aliveness" under the guise of love. I was being smothered in other's definitions of me. I had to truly walk out the door and take another road. I did.

POINT 7

The voices of my childhood told me in one way or another that RISK TAKING IS SCARY. I rebelled and was always a risk taker in spite of repeated warnings. The voices went on to say over and over again, "stay safe, play safe, be careful, don't rock the boat, don't go too near the water, don't swim in the waves, don't don't you can't you can't..." And from my earliest memory on I replied, "I CAN, IWILL,I WON'T LISTEN TO YOU!!"

The real message to me was that life OUT THERE was dark and dangerous and life IN HERE i.e. in the safety net of the family, in New

York City, was safe and warm and secure. You'll be devoured if you go OUT THERE, no one will want you OUT THERE.

What I knew in my heart and gut was that I was being devoured IN HERE. The unsafe at any speed place was the place they all called HOME. I was to search for another home till I found it at last at age 34 in the shape of "strangers" who finally accepted me for the me I really was. I first had to accept myself before anyone else truly could. It took many gallons of tears to finally arrive at this simple solution.

THE WAY OUT WAS TRULY JUST A STEP THROUGH THE DOOR -- WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG TO TAKE THAT STEP? The answer lies in the power of childhood and in the power and control of families

The lesson is clear -- we must teach our children well and let them grow and develop into unique selves that we as adults nurture, love and protect. Healthy children don't have to go through what I (and most of you) go through to reach their hopes and dreams as adult women.

POINT 8

My fear of dying was a red flag danger signal (that I never saw) that I needed to make drastic changes in my life or I would die. Now I hear the signals by body sends out. I sense danger in a stiff neck or a sore back. I pay attention to these signals and learn from them. They are keeping me healthy and fit.

Death was on my mind because life wasn't. I was afraid that if I walked out of that door, I would be somehow punished by death. The truth was that death was only waiting for me if I didn't go through the door. The door was the portal of a new a wonderful life.

POINT 9

What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. I didn't die. I am stronger.

POINT 10

We all have little tapes of childhood voices in our head. You and I can't block out these tapes but we can make friends with them, politely listen and then tell the voices to "get lost!" When my "voices" come, often early in the morning, I politely say, "Hi there, I don't need you anymore. Please go away." And like the mosquitoes buzzing around the Schoolhouse, I don't ignore them and pretend

they are not there, I get my can of Raid or my fly swatter and I get rid of them. I make them dead before they get me.

POINT 11

When I gave up my anger and resentments I released an enormous amount of energy and freedom to create. I revealed new parts of myself that I never even knew existed. This doesn't mean giving up being angry at world events or at stupidity, greed and pettiness -- it means we can channel our anger productively and use the energy to do something useful like write a letter to a politician, attend a demonstration, start an action group -- not get a headache, heart disease or cancer.

POINT 12

I spent 34 years thinking love meant being a perfect wife, mother, daughter. If I were perfect I could make my mother, husband, friends truly happy. . Because I couldn't do this I must be flawed and imperfect. Thus, I was always in a panic (anxiety) when things were not right or in control. Just recently I have given up this PERFECT myth and become an ordinary imperfect person who is allowed to make mistakes. What a relief!

Two small but significant incidents comes to mind. A few weeks ago I, who never forget anything, left my precious date book in a Toronto restaurant. When I arrived at my hotel in Kitchener, I couldn't find my book. Ordinarily I would have gone into a total and hysterical panic. Instead, I stayed calm and figured out where I might have left it. Lo and behold, I had left it where I had had lunch in Toronto. I called the restaurant who held it for me for the next few days.

I forgave myself this error and promptly made another mistake the following day when I took a friend's car keys with me to a meeting on the other side of town. I never do things like this. Other less perfect beings do this but not me. I was actually glad I had not been perfect as I drove the keys back to my relieved friend who was in shock that I the perfect one had made this error. We laughed. It was such a relief for me to allow myself to be human. I usually apologize every 5 minutes for making any mistake. I didn't even apologize once re the car keys -- I just let it go as human fallibility.

These may seem like small examples but these two examples are symbolic of a deep change in how I see myself in relation to the world. Believe me it is a relief to be human not to be SUPERWOMAN.

POINT 13

I have added these words to my want list:

I want to be carefree, playful, have more fun, laugh more, rest more and plant an herb garden.

POINT 14

The person I live with now likes me as a fully human being and is actually thrilled when I feel good. This is a major change for me. I love it!

POINT 15

Here's a formula I invented for this book.

$P = E + A + P + I$

Perfection equals Exhaustion, Anxiety, Pain, Illness

Does the formula fit you? It sure doesn't fit me much anymore.

What are you going to do about it if it does fit you?

POINT 16

An emerging theme in all I have done in the past is that I allowed people to take and want more from me than I could or wanted to deliver. Now I am learning to set BOUNDARIES and to CONTROL my own life choices. It is such a relief to say NO nicely or even at times not nicely. What I do choose, I now do better and with more energy and zest .

rainsong-1982

all that i want is to walk in the rain
to feel my hair wet
to speak my own name...
all that i want is a space of my own
with quiet and solitude
no voices no phone...

the music of the raindrops
the wind storm is my dream
and i need someone there to hear my silent scream...

i want to break free more and not live afraid
i want to face squarely the games that I've played
to put my name on the words that i write
carefully choose where i stand and i fight

i lost my spirit but i've found it in this rain
and one day i'll write of my anguish and pain
i truly must break free to walk on this earth
and now at age 40 I am giving birth

i dare live in truth now
no illusions no lie
i can see life now not wanting to die

wet and bedraggled i weep in this rain
it's my way of saying i want to "go sane".

the darkness desends now ,the wind had its play
the moonlight is lighting the end of the day
and i am beginning to walk my own way
and i am beginning to walk my own way...

snow song-1982

if i don't face my past and don't face my pain
if i dare not run in the misty-like rain
if i don't admit i have done nothing wrong
if i don't start to sing my own unique song

then i will surely die i scream
i cannot lose my childlike dream...

if i don't take a walk in this white icy snow
if into the wilderness i'm too busy to go
if i whip myself sore with anxiety and guilt
surely my soul will quiver and wilt...

if i don't stop to paint with the words that i write
if i ever stop fighting for what i know is right
if i give in to voices that lie as they call
then one day that shall be my own downfall...

job security i haven't attained
but i finally chose my very own name
shreds of my past still gnaw at my heart
some of me lives in a dark secret part
filled with memories that i must let go
the wound is deep - the healing is slow...

my path is a new one for my generation
lifelike not deathlike a joyful celebration
old ideas die as new ones are born
for the old i do cry
there are moments to mourn

time now to walk in the snow by each tree
footprints i leave that tomorrow won't be
footprints i leave that tomorrow won't be...

PART III

SOMETIMES IT REALLY IS DANGEROUS OUT THERE

My absolutely worst fear in life is that something dreadful will happen to Jack. That after years of searching for the kind of relationship we now share it will disintegrate overnight.

I had dreamed up every imaginable horrible situation and horror story except the one that actually almost blew our world apart.

For the past two years we have experienced stress that most people could not endure. But endure we did because we had no choice. We have come out of this episode stronger and better than ever. We also know now is a time to nurse our wounds, heal our bodies and souls, reflect on what we have learned and take a new direction with our lives.

When I met Jack in 1976 he had been the new President of Frontier College for one year. Frontier College is not a college at all, but a unique Canadian adult education institution that works with people on the margins of society.(see appendix).

Jack came to Frontier as it's youngest President. He had a vision for the College -- he wanted to make illiteracy (and thus literacy) a major Canadian issue. He has done a magnificent job on that front. Jack's gentle strength and strong moral leadership took Frontier from a "has been" organization into an exciting and dynamic cutting edge educational institution which dared deal with those adults missed by our education system and were the most rejected by our society -- people who had been in prison (i.e. ex-cons), people who were living on the street and people with disabilities.

Jack, in a style that was deeply moral, ethical and passionately personal, partnered with those no one else would touch to start such innovative programs as HELP - a program run by and for ex-cons to find jobs and dignity after they were released from prison; BEAT THE STREET, another program started and run by two ex -street kids themselves and INDEPENDENT STUDIES which to date has found tutors for hundreds of people with disabilities living in or out of institutions. Jack was also the heart beat behind LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE, the methodology called SCIL (student centered individualized learning) and READ CANADA.

Jack found a home at Frontier for people who needed a Second Chance at learning and living. He opened the door wide and made everyone welcome. For 15 years creativity and energy flourished.

THE HELP CRISIS

However in 1988 the HELP program started to face several major challenges. The founder of HELP and Jack's main partner in the project, Tony McGillvary (who is the subject of another book - Square John) was slowly dying and was unable to lead the program into a more secure future. The new leadership which emerged did not have the passion, commitment or integrity of Tony and the new team slowly eroded into factions and rough/tough guy tactics.

It is only surprising in retrospect that the program lasted as long as it did without serious problems given the nature of the population being served and the deep wounds suffered by most of the men and women served by HELP. But real problems did emerge and in the summer of 1988 Jack reluctantly and with real trepidation fired several of the men in the leadership of HELP.

Jack took a brave and correct action but one that was not taken lightly by those fired. All hell broke loose. Hurt and abused men reacted violently to their dismissal. Jack and the College were suddenly caught in a type of violence we only read about in movies. We could deal with the usual anger of people who lose their jobs, but what followed was not in any script that was familiar to us.

In mid August, 1989, after a year of legal hassles and untold aggravation re the HELP program, the wife of one of the men who was fired committed suicide. It is not surprising that this distraught man blamed Frontier and Jack in particular for his wife's suicide. Death threats to Jack started in earnest in August 1989.

The tragic death of this woman of course had little to do with the firings and much to do with her sad history of alcohol abuse and overall mental health problems. But when you are an ex-con who was a sexually abused and battered child you are not exactly going to act cool and rationally. To put it mildly the man in question totally broke down and "freaked out!"

Every psychiatrist and lawyer we consulted advised us to take these death threats very seriously. We began a series of moves in and out of our home in Toronto.

There were those who said that the threats were all a bluff and just the rantings of a spoiled obnoxious brat. This particular "brat" had spent years in prison for violent acts and we weren't about to gamble our lives on the hunch that this was a bluff. Better to be safe than sorry.

The situation got nastier and nastier as Jack received letters and calls of a frightening and threatening nature. Somehow through all of this we managed to keep an equilibrium that surprised even us. We stuck together, talked out each episode and were circled by an incredible array of friends and advisors that monitored and supported our every move.

Jack was also at the same time trying to manage Frontier College and the ever growing fight against illiteracy that he had spearheaded.

At the Annual General Meeting of Frontier in October 1989, Jack gave the speech of his life and then literally collapsed from exhaustion. A creative solution from several supporters on his board offered Jack a one year sabbatical to recuperate and regain his health and energy. and then return to the College in Sept. 1990.

Jack then took one of the bravest steps of his life. He agreed to the sabbatical and in early November after making plans for John O'Leary to be the acting and interim President, Jack went to our schoolhouse to sleep and to begin to write his book about leadership of cutting edge organizations.

As a 44 year old white Protestant male, Jack could have chosen the route we see all too often in our male friends over 40. Instead of leaving jobs that are killing them or instead of taking a vacation, these supposedly bright men literally choose to have heart attacks or strokes which stop them dead or puts them "away" for extended periods of medical leave. This seems to be more socially acceptable than saying, "I'm taking a break and will come back when I have regained my health. and equilibrium.

I, and a few others, knew in our hearts that Jack could never return to Frontier College for he had stretched the organization to the limits

of its mandate . A faction on the board were just sitting in wait and itching for Jack to leave so they could seize control and turn Frontier back into a neat and tidy bureaucrats dream and get rid of all these weird people who Jack had nurtured, welcomed and served all these many years.

Alan Clarke, the current Chairman of the Board, was a particularly vicious and nasty actor who couldn't even wait for Jack to leave to start his maneuvering and game playing to seize control of and take the College back to its macho establishment image of a bygone era;

Alan, who had been on our trip to China in 1976, had always acted like an arrogant older brother or father to Jack. In 15 years he never once had a serious conversation with me. He was terrified of my strength and jealous of the relationship Jack and I shared.

Jack's integrity and honesty flew in the face of Alan's deceit in both his professional and personal life. He embodied all that I despise of the liberal social democratic facade which when scratched shows its nasty and mean spirited fangs. Alan attracted all the backward elements of the board together to overthrow Jack in his absence. Mr. Clarke didn't even have the courage or decency to face Jack square eye to eye. His cowardly behaviour is an example of everything we stand against.

Alan Clarke and his team used a tragic and impossible situation to stage a coup at Frontier. But little did they know that Jack was spiritually way ahead of them and had decided that his life's work and his love of people on the margins was his calling and vocation. His allegiance was not to a building called Frontier, but to people who were oppressed and exploited. Frontier had been a vehicle for Jack and for me to use to serve people who needed education and help. We had used the building well for 15 years. Now it was time to move on.

Instead of heart attack, stroke or cancer-- on Dec.10, 1989 Jack and I boarded a North West Orient plane in San Francisco and headed for Asia. There we spent the next two and a half months restructuring our lives, reaffirming our dreams and licking our wounds.

We knew if Jack stayed as President of Frontier he would be a target for death. Again we chose life and commitment to serve people over some warped love affair with an organization and a beautiful

building that ceased to exist after Alan and his crew had taken away its heart.

Instead of choosing death or hanging on to something that was no longer viable to change, we experienced Asia and India and opened our horizons to even newer and more exciting opportunities. Instead of ill health, we lost 20 pounds each and changed our diets. We started to jog and exercise and instead of letting this episode defeat us it has made us stronger., wiser and more reflective.

'WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU, STRENGTHENS YOU.
terror and life

i swear by the bones in me
i will never forget the terror
terror we would not live to see
the earth's great wonders
a future for you and me

terror for you - terror and fear
i see life now with new colours
so clear

grateful to be alive
i thrive
though i often can't sleep
i weep
for the joy of being alive
with you]
for our love
pure-true

death-threats i'll never forget
death threats faced us in the eye
we chose to fly
and said good-bye to one life
to welcome the new
thank you.
thank you

MAPS AGAIN

One of the most difficult of the MAPS key questions is WHAT ARE YOUR GIFTS, TALENTS, STRENGTHS? Most people at our workshops have the most trouble with this question. They are always willing to list their flaws, weaknesses, problems -- but their strengths -- this causes a flurry of embarrassment and shame.

How can I list my good points? Isn't that bragging? Isn't that arrogant?

No. It's healthy and fun. So go ahead and for a few minutes brag about yourself? What are your strong points? List away.

For me at this very moment in life my strongest point is my willingness and ability to face the truth - to live life without illusions and to be filled with wonder, energy and aliveness. I also feel it is a strong point for me to be able to be sad, mad and bad once in awhile and enjoy that too. I am alive and healthy today because I am not perfect -- I am just human.

The above took years for me to achieve..

I am now going to encourage you to take a journey far more enticing and dangerous than a journey to outer space -- it is a journey into yourself -- a journey into inner space. This journey must be taken freely and truly must be of your own volition. No one can decide on buying the tickets for you This is a journey you must take alone.

Be sure however to surround yourself with travel mates who you can meet at points along your trip to share stories and adventures.

After I began my journey (which still continues) friends said I looked "really well", but they didn't really see. No one but me and maybe Jack could possibly see my radiant new inside--the new and beautiful brave side, the strong side the free side which is daily emerging from the shadows of anxiety and fear.

Today I stand more solidly on the earth, grounded in my own real reality-- I can say NO more, and YES more. I am me . I'm not afraid to admit to who I am and be proud of it.

I now can admit I am a poet and dreamer -- a romantic who is in love with the mystery of the fall colours and the pounding of the surf

in the oceans of the world. I am deeply in love with life and with someone who loves me back in his own unique way.

The journey into healing truly began with the emotional collapse of my mother in 1986 and crescendoed with her move to Toronto in 1988. This was followed by my scare with breast cancer, Jack's battle with death threats, our trip to Asia and the decision to leave Frontier and strike out for new territory.

I am no longer mad at my mother, HELP, Frontier College or any other organization. I need and want no more than I have today-- health, love and work I can sink my teeth into..

I have climbed Inca ruins, walked the green and windy cliffs of Scotland and Ireland, run along the shores of the Atlantic, Pacific and the Sea of India. I have touched the Himalayas , seen the Shwedagon pagoda, and have experienced India.

I have conquered a space as dark and dangerous as Herzog's Annapurna and have survived, as Shakleton did, the incredible winds, snow and ice of my own Antarctica.

I have delved into the soul of my own heart of darkness and come out finding not hatred and revenge but diamonds, rubies, sapphires, bright love and light for myself, for Jack and for the world.

Have I thus given up the rebel, the revolutionary, the fierce anti-fascist fighter in me? Have I forgotten my promise to revere the memory of the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, the resistance fighters of World War II, the resistance fighters today against apartheid all over the globe.? You bet I haven't given up that side. It, in fact ,glows brighter today than it has for many years, as my fighting spirit seeps back into every pore of me.

Have I suddenly discovered God or a new religion.? Am I a New Age wonder? No, not at all. My roots go down deep into my own cultural Judaism and I have discovered a dimension of spirituality that adds to what I am. It is a new dimension of compassion, love and understanding for my own deep wounds and thus for the wounds of those around me including those in my family .I especially have found a forgiveness and compassion for my mother who truly did the best she could She didn't do all that badly at all...

To those who still demand that I fill their voids, do their work, fulfill their unmet needs I say "GOODBYE!". To those who can share my anger at the injustice in the world and at the beauty and mystery of the Fall colours--to them I say "HELLO!".

IT'S ABOUT CHANGE

When I was seeing Paul . regularly I would ask, "Why do I have to work so hard at life-why can't I just relax and not be so conscious all the time?" I answered the question myself -- If I (and you too) want to really CHANGE, GROW and DEVELOP into something new and apart from your old patterns, we must work hard at the change. Change doesn't come by wishing for it. It only comes by working for it.

I don't for a minute believe that change comes in a weekend workshop, a two week course or from a book (even this one). I do believe that all the above can be catalysts to change. Real change whether in a social system or a person takes a long time. In this "micro wave" society we expect everything to happen in a minute or two.. It's cheap to think that patterns in our lives can be broken in a week-end, a week or for that matter even in a year. My own deep change has taken at least a decade and was precipitated as change always is, by several crisis in my life which definitely sped the change along.

Time itself also lends to change., As I got older, I got more tired of my own negative patterns and the patterns of those around me. Since I realized they weren't going to be the ones to change, I decided I wanted to change my own life. The decision and the dream are ultimately yours and so dear friends is the nightmare.

There are many things that are much more difficult to change than ourselves -- like the weather, our parents and world events. One of the few real changeable items in the world is us--you and me. Here is something tangible you can choose to work on daily. The results will be fantastic.

Yesterday for example, I completed what was for me an unthought of endeavor. I ran 3.9 km en route to my destination of the little town of Palmer Rapids. A few months ago I could barely make 1 km. I was ecstatic, exhausted and thrilled. Little but little I am increasing

my jogging. My aim is not to be Ben Johnson, but to slowly gain on myself and keep myself strong and fit. Tomorrow I go back to my 3 km jog as that's what I enjoy. Once a week I'll stretch the jog out a bit till and gradually by the end of the summer, I will make it to my destination.

The analogy to my life is clear (I hope). Slowly but surely you and I can reach our desired outcome.

Most crisis in people's lives has to do with something changing. How people deal with this is a key to how you live your life, for life, as the earth, is always changing. Some changes are more important than others -- changing jobs, location of your home, marriage, children etc. But the core is always the same. *Where do I stand in relation to change?*

Even though change is always scary, it is also exciting. Most of all it is inevitable. Every day we change because we grow older. This isn't good or bad, but it is, surely inevitable.

I am a person who is always scared of change, but I jump into the water anyway and usually enjoy it. What's your reaction to change? It's common to be afraid, to have stage fright -- it's not common, and not healthy, to avoid change. Take a few minutes and reflect on your relationship with change. Write down how you react to change. Write down how you'd like to react to change. Are they different?

It is harder to face change alone. It is harder if you face anything alone, but change in particular requires company. Change needs a friend to help when you are afraid to jump in the water. Often change needs someone to push us into the water. For if you never jump in you can end up dry and dead like the portrait in the next piece.

nightmare

read this well
it's my own private nightmarish hell--
in a congregate care home
old women do roam
an expensive nursing home
is the subject of this poem

old women their wills decayed
death simply delayed
afraid and dying - to themselves they are lying

in this nursing garden are the living dead
on good food they are fed
good memories they have none
for they never had much fun

i sigh for these living lives unlead
now they are the living dead
i wake up and scream
it is only a dream

dream

"golden flower in the sky"

a golden flower reaches to the sky
the flower is "i"
turning from soft petals to jade
i made
the leap,
out of the mouth of the smiling monster
her teeth ready to grab my soft petals

but of jade was i made
and erasing the monster from the scene
where she had been
the golden flower stretched her jade green petals to the sky
as "i"
and above her pain
and through the misty rain
a butterfly pranced
and a unicorn was born...
(august 1986)

never the illusion

never again, never the lie
no more illusion
i wanted to die!
suicide schemes
nightmarish dreams
lying in bed - wished i were dead.

ashamed
i had failed at
playing the daughter the wife
infertile crying alone
i was dying
sighing

"i can't make you happy"
"i can't fill your life"
"i can't be the perfect daughter or wife"
for you i will no longer live out a lie
nor will i die
but i will cry
weep hard and cry...

i want it all
for i hear the call of
kathmandu, burma,
the wild irish coast
and a love that knows me
he i need most

fertile now i'm as green as the earth
giving birth
renewed
with childlike mirth

my core is opening
to another new door-
each pore is
naked at last to the lies of the past
the line
between life and death is
terribly fine
the line
is
fine...

MORE OF THE STORY or THE STORY UNFOLDS

I am sitting in New York City on Park Avenue in a gorgeous apartment surrounded by all my relatives. My mother is having a full blown depression-anxiety attack. She is in full flight with nausea, vomiting, sighing, lots of sighing etc. Everyone else seems to be OK and I look alright on the outside. I want to shriek and scream and get as far away as the North or South Pole.

New York is far better than visiting in Florida as in New York there are more diversions and places to escape.

Being here always makes me understand why I got married at 19, why I left for Canada (although I'm surprised I didn't head for the North Pole), why I almost killed myself in two ill-fated marriages and why I have emerged as a lover of life.

I now live on a planet called Toronto in a house called Thome Crescent which is 8 trillion light years from where I was born in New York. At age 34 when I went to China and met Jack, I finally started to make the break with tradition and gave up guilt, self-destruction, neurotic men, martyrdom and self mutilation i.e. smoking, nail biting, etc.

At 34 I was a survivor of two marriages, an almost nervous breakdown, a wrecked thyroid, infertility and several name changes,

I finally start to understand WHY. I can actually laugh and cry at the past, and I am in love with the present and the future.

I am actually smiling the whole while I type this as it is so human and funny. The best part is I survived it all. I even managed to get a Master's degree from Columbia University and a Doctorate in Education from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst while I was going through all of this life stuff.

I wouldn't trade a minute (well, maybe one or two).

HORSE RADISH - WHITE OR RED

I was asked by cousin #1 to go out of the apartment (thank god) and buy two Gold's kosher Horseradish -- a simple task or so I thought. After I regained consciousness, I ended up in a ritzy food emporium on Lexington Avenue where I easily and for a large sum of cash bought one red and one white Gold's horseradish.

My mother, aged 75 at the time, and totally bananas that particular day was convinced that the only place to get the horseradish was at a small grocery store on the corner of 71st Street and Lexington Avenue. This store of course no longer existed. My mother almost convinced me that it would be impossible to find the right horseradish anywhere in New York City but I escaped the horse radish discussion and on my very own found a store with as much horseradish as the heart could desire.

I brought it home and everyone marvelled at my ingenuity.

All my life that was the story. It was YOU CAN'T. All the time a veritable litany of YOU CAN'TS For some indescribable reason I never believed it. I often wonder where I got that urge to say NO all the time. There's a great picture of me as a kid and my look says it all - at two years I was saying "maybe you can't, but I can." That is still my favorite chant.

Although I can and I did the attitude of YOU CAN'T is not something healthy to grow up with. It saps your energy. Although I always fought back it took its toll in my health and my future relationships until I was 34. I heartily recommend a spirit of "I can" in marriage and raising children. Just think how nice it would be to grow up at 18 instead of 47.

MURDER IN THE FELAFEL SHOP

I am in still on the same visit in New York and my mother and I decide to go out for lunch. We stop at a little jewish felafel shop but my mother decides she really wants a bagel and lox. Again the pattern emerges -- If we are having felafel she wants a bagel. If we are having pizza she wants chinese food. Wherever we are, she wishes we were somewhere else. This is crazy making at best and leads to murderous thoughts.

I woof down my absolutely delicious felafel and rush like a lunatic back to our rich neighborhood where my mother can have her coffee, bagel and cream cheese where she is comfortable.

All these incidents are JOY-KILLERS. I spent my life like that. We'd get somewhere and my mother would wish she was somewhere else. Jack, who is a calm, secure, stable person could be reduced to sheer exhaustion by this behaviour. The pattern got progressively worse as my mother's world closed in around her and she literally stopped going out. The symptoms were there early in her life but no one ever advised her to seek help. The tragedy is a wasted life of an energetic and talented woman who could have been happy and healthy.

WHAT AND WHO YOU ARE AT 40 IS WHAT AND WHO YOU'LL BE AT 80

I truly believe that what we are at 40 is what we will be at 80 I urge the reader (if you are over 40) to take a good cold hard look at yourself now and start to fix up what you don't like and keep what you do like.

NOW Don't wait until, like my own mother, it was too late.

STOP ACTION

MAPS TIME AGAIN

FOUR LISTS

WHAT I REALLY LIKE ABOUT MYSELF.
WHAT I REALLY DON'T LIKE ABOUT MYSELF
WHAT I WANT TO CHANGE--NOW
HOW I AM GOING TO GO ABOUT CHANGING
I.E. ACTIONS I CAN TAKE TODAY

In 1976 I signed a declaration of war and a declaration on Independence for myself. I left my mother, Roger and Jeff psychologically and spiritually and started to find myself. It's been quite a journey these past 47 years, but well worth the time and energy.

I remember writing:

I WANT:

**freedom from my past
and to be able to someday laugh about it
(which I can now)
**life in the present
**passion in the present
**dreams for the future

and now that's what I have.

new york rhythms

it's so clear, sad and funny
but i'm ok even here in new york now
cause i have a real home and you in toronto
i found what i wanted at long last
a home, a love, my work
i truly don't need another thing...
my values and directions are clear
i'm OK even here in new york now
the rhythm of the city
suits my mood today
it is lively and alive
not the deathmaking
of florida's plastic sunshine
the concrete rhythms fit my mood
it is vibrant, vital and doesn't ever stop
it is a cacophony of noise, light and a
mirage of humanity on the street

at every turn my family says
YOU CANT
at every turn a negative rant
play the wife part
instead i found my true heart
two marriages died for i had lied
to myself
put that self on a shelf

i can laugh here in new york now,
but i can't stay
for the role that i play
is to be away
to walk my own way
today and every day
from this day forth

STEPPING OUT OF THE CIRCLE OF THE FAMILY NET AND LANDING IN KATMANDU

A family can be a warm nurturing place in which children grow into adulthood being whatsoever their natures dictate. In the nurturing family the musical child gets what she needs for her talent and the artist and shopkeeper are as respected as much as the budding physicist. The future dressmaker and hairdresser are encouraged as much as the teacher and surgeon.

In the nurturing family children's dreams will be fed with stardust and magic. Women children especially, will be reinforced and affirmed for their flights of fancy to climb the highest mountains and sail the wildest seas.

Hardly anyone I know of in my generation was thus nurtured. We were raised to be dutiful and obedient wives and mothers whose "careers" in nursing, education, secretarial etc. were to assist and help our husbands.

This was to dramatically change in the 60's and my friends are raising their women children to be as adventuress as their sons.

I spent most of my youth and adult life pleasing my family and then pleasing my husbands who took it for granted that I would never have a desire or dream of my own. I managed to put two men through graduate school and at least had the sense on the second round to put myself through as well. I got three people through graduate school and paid all the bills in the process.

I wanted, as a teenager, to be a labour lawyer or a family physician but education was my route because as a "teacher" I would always have the security to assist my family. But dreams die hard and though I am not a lawyer I am an advocate for families and children and though I am not a family physician, I am teaching a challenging medical school course for future doctors. My work related dream at the moment is to start a small private practice to help families with educational and social problems.

My biggest and most secret dream however was to get to Kathmandu in Nepal. That one I kept to myself. I read all the

mountaineering books and once again assisted husband #1, the rock climber and mountaineer in his endeavors. The irony is I got to Kathmandu and he didn't. A small ha ha is due and an ironic and lovely smile lights up my face as I think of this. I deserve a little sense of enjoyment and gloating over this achievement.

Yes, this January, 1990 Jack and I flew into the Kathmandu, Nepal airport at 2 PM in the afternoon after watching the majestic panorama of the Everest and Annapurna Range soar into our view from the cockpit of the Royal Nepal Airlines jet..

I asked the stewardess with tears in my eyes if maybe, just possibly, the Captain would allow me in the cockpit. Usually they don't allow anyone near the front of the plane, but something in my voice gave her a message. They let me in, and in seconds my childhood dream loomed white and huge in front of me. Although it is often cloudy at that time of year the skies opened up in a royal blue panorama that revealed the whole range. I knew I had indeed come home -- come home to me, to myself, to my dreams.

It didn't matter anymore that my mother wished "that Marsha were just simply an ordinary housewife who was not out and working from morning till night. That there were no grandchildren. That there were not so many handicapped and ex-cons around her life and that she would settle down and stop travelling. " It just didn't matter.

At age 47 I was finally OK. I would continue to travel and to have weird and wondrous friends in my life. I would go to Tibet, Outer Mongoli, Afganistan Cambodia and Vietnam. I would continue to climb mountains, hike and camp in out of the way places. It was not a rebellion; it was my life and it no longer mattered what anyone thought.

As Everest loomed and Annapurna soared my heart sang. The cancer was gone in more ways than one. It would never return for the vision of those peaks soaring higher in the sky than any cloud would dare to go, jolted me as a natural shock treatment into a new health I had never experienced before.

When we landed, I literally flew into town and felt as comfortable in the weird and strange Kathmandu Valley as I had anywhere on earth. I was in love with Nepal for the 4 weeks we traveled. I loved

the dilapidated old crowded buses , the rickety taxis , and the hassle of the kids peddling their tiger balm. I loved it all!

I had always dreamed of trekking in the Himalayas -it was another fantasy I kept well to myself. There were some things too precious for anyone to stomp on. In a few days I found out that one could easily go off trekking on one's own without the huge entourage that the travel agents tried so hard to sell in the West.

Jack and I chose a route and took off in a jeep that just about broke all the bones in our body. We hired a young local teenager to carry my pack so I could be free to romp unhindered by weight and so we wouldn't be hassled by every local guide in the area.

We took off for eight hard hiking days and nights on the Annapurna side near Pokara. Names that once meant nothing to me were now magical music..Chandrecot will be remembered as the place where we first got the full sight of the untouched and unclimbed Fishtail Mountain Poon Hill - a mountain walk early in the morning of our fourth day simply took my breath totally away as the entire Annapurna Range bathed in the dawns first light greeted my eyes. I will never forget.

All the pain of the past years melted as I stared into the vast Dahligheri icefield. I was on the precipice of the deepest gorge on the face of the earth. It was pure wonder and I felt a happiness that will keep my engines burning for years to come.

I close my eyes anytime of the day or night and remember the vision of white snow, hard rock and majesty far greater and bigger than I could have ever imagined.. It put me and my world into perspective. It made me at once a mountaineer, a musician, a poet and a woman at the threshold of the healthiest portion of her life.

I didn't have to fight the YOU CAN'TS anymore. I CAN would be my national anthem for the next 40 years as I soared through life with a person by my side who saw the mountains with his eyes, in his way and who didn't impose that way on me. I saw those mountains in the light of love and an acceptance I had struggled for for far too many years, but the struggle was worth it.

The hike was at times grueling. In the Himalayas switchbacks are unheard of and the roads go straight up and straight down. My

knees were like rubber. after the eight days We are determined to go back soon and do the entire hike to Jomson and Muktinath and then fly back to Pokara, in the little plane that once in awhile flies when the weather is right.

I decided somewhere deep in the Himalayas to switch from being a butterfly into becoming a unicorn.

Butterflies are gentle, beautiful colourful, delicate, lovely and fleeting. I don't feel like a butterfly.

I feel like a Unicorn after my trek up to Poon Hill in the early dawn. Unicorns are magical, mystical and musical. They are eccentric, unique, strong and self sufficient. Unicorns are full of joy and bring surprises. They are full of fantasy and wonder. They fly or walk all over the world with one specially chosen mate who is their partner for life. I feel like a unicorn.

**AND WHAT ANIMAL IS YOUR METAPHOR
WHO ARE YOU AND WHY...ONCE AGAIN STOP, THINK, REFLECT AND
WRITE DOWN YOUR NOTES ON YOURSELF.**

reality like a knife

i want my reality sharp
and pointed as a knife
sharp and pointed as a blade
edged like a razor.

illusions create confusions
lies half truths and subterfuge
kill and de-energize my spirit
degrade my life

can'ts and won'ts
shouldn'ts and couldn'ts and don'ts
impossibility thinking
cocoon created
to hide me from reality

i lived in a desert of dead spirits
who didn't touch me
or each other
who didn't listen to me
or each other
and who never felt my real world]
a world where i dreamed of
travel to a place
called kathmandu

my life
is just a microcosm
of the larger lie
it is political and personal
political because of the reality
personal because it is my reality

the ultimate choice
is to face the lie head on and
not repeat it again
for yet another generation
the ultimate lie
is to lie

about the lie
and recreate the illusion
that all is well
when it isn't

in my work
i strive to create
a new vision and
re-integrate those
including myself who we have chosen
to devalue and debase and hide away
from view

my best friends
are men and women
whose wounds are as deep as mine
closed away in institutions of brick and blood
what binds us together is a desire to be free
and to free the others who will choose
to be free
too

for me there is no other
choice but
death

my advice
surround yourself
with dreamers and poets
lovers and music makers
fighters and revolutionaries
shut out the negative
forces who drain you
of energy and life

those who dream of retirement
and condo tombs in florida
are not the ones going to the edge
they do not want to fly
leave them alone

impolite and irreverent
with my hair

naturally greying and curly
with hairy legs
and rosy red glasses
i say
to the won'ts and can'ts the shoulds
get out of my life
let me see my beautiful mountains

many have loved an illusion of me
and now they can't stand to be with me
for i am on the razors edge
i am not an illusion
i am real
and with my magic circle of friends
we are building a centre
and a better world
where there is hope
and much more beauty

the covenant of noah's rainbow
lit up the sky in the Himalayas
my life is a bouquet
of colours and events
the unicorn and the rainbow
are now in my life
and in my blood
the majesty of the annapurna range
travels with me
it is etched indelibly
infinity is in my eyes
and in my heart
forever.

BUDDHA EYES ON MY KNAPSACK

buddha eyes on my knapsack
remind me of kathmandu
and a three month adventure
of mind expanding beauty
life in the real
life in the raw
life with you

buddha eyes on my knapsack
remind me of
love and communion
shared in a dusk filled moonlit hike up
poon hill
to see unveiled a
panorama or such immense beauty
and magnitude
sealed in me forever

the agony and ecstasy of india
poverty and disease
politics and hope
rage
the need for revolutionary change
this is crystal clear again to me

buddha eyes on my knapsack
remind me of expanded horizons
renewed anger at a world filled still
with apartheid, exploitation
greed and disease
yet a vision of hope
glimmered from dharvala and calcutta

buddha eyes on my knapsack
remind me most of you and i
of friendship and love
of the silhouette
of the shwedagon pagoda
at dawn and dusk
of the fish tail mountain
and the two goddesses
of the annapurna masif

buddha eyes on my knapsack
remind me that i am no longer
alone
nor disconnected

i am whole
and i am home
the buddha eyes look at me
and i at them
the buddha eyes
and my own eyes
remember the past
live now in the present
and are looking forward
to a bright and new future

PART III

Basically this book is about families -- mine and yours. I can write now as I am not consumed with anger and resentment at my family. Rather, I am filled with a new and lovely kind of smile that fills me up as I write. and think about my life. I have ,at age 47, come to peace with myself and my family. I can appreciate them and laugh and cry at their truly humanness.

Mine was not a mean spirited or nasty family,-- this was not a physically abusive or cruel family, nor was it decadent or obscene. Mine was simply a large struggling middle class Jewish family (though the dynamics could well be Italian, Puerto Rican, Indian, Portuguese, Chinese)_ They truly did the best they could under the circumstances and I would have been fine had I bought into their whole ethic.and value system.

I gave something up when I stepped out of the circle of their comfort and dared venture into the dark unknown of life. But I had no choice for my heart and soul's push was OUT not IN and my destiny was to be an explorer into new dimensions.

I am glad I decided to seek help in restructuring my life in order to get healthier To be able to build a new life not based on anger at the old but on an understanding and forgiving foundation. I can now go into the new a healthier and more vigorous person. This I am doing and will continue to do forever.

MY WORK

The work that I have been involved in for over 27 years involves being with people and families most in society would reject. I started as a young teacher of the deaf at the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York City. I then moved to Nashville Tennessee where I started the first of my many pilot projects in integrated education at the Peabody College Campus.

I always felt segregating and labelling children into category boxes did neither them nor their teachers any good,. This idea ,radical 25 years ago, is now quite acceptable current thinking in special education for most populations we labelled I keep pushing the

limits of this thinking to the ultimate which is to build schools that reflect the full diversity of our communities.

In Nashville ,I and my students ,literally went into the ghetto areas of the city and took poor white and black children and mixed them with middle class kids as well as children with disabilities. It was a great experience and one that taught me experientially that indeed ALL CHILDREN could and must learn together.

Breaking down walls in education has been my theme song. From Nashville I left the USA altogether during the 60's with Roger, who was a Vietnam War resister. We ended up outside Montreal where I kept up my pioneering integration work partly with the Montreal Oral School for the Deaf and partly teaching teachers in the Eastern Townships region under the auspices of McGill University.

When my 7 year marriage ended I moved to Montreal and there decided to go back to school for a doctorate in regular education focusing on teacher education and leadership..After all how was special education going to change if regular education didn't.?

My three years at the University of Massachusetts were simply great. I met Jeffrey Goodman in Montreal and together we went through an immersion in living, learning and loving. We were at the University of Massachusetts in the heyday of educational change . Large numbers of black students from New York and Mass were brought in to get advanced graduate level degrees

The atmosphere on the campus was electric and charged with tension and excitement. I took many course in black and urban studies and was involved in student politics to the hilt. Jeff and I ran a successful and innovative teacher education project called EXPLORATIONS which attracted the best and the brightest undergraduates who wanted to design student centered learning of their own.

At this time I met ,and was influenced by Paul and Rochelle Chandler, two of the leaders of the black student community. I was then imbued with the spirit of Herbert Kohl, Jonathan Kozol, Sylvia Ashton Warner. I was going to fix the ghetto schools ,particularly in New York City

One day Paul stopped me dead in my tracks. "Fix it," he said.. "We should burn it to the ground.! How can you fix a concentration camp?" he asked me

It was a profound question and started my deeper reflection on the underlying causes of poverty, inequality, racism, sexism etc.

I was later to be involved in the take over of the School of Education - my first ever sleep in take over of a faculty and all at the ripe old age of 28.

The take over was part of a democratic student movement led by the Afro-American student Union and the key demand was for the right to a more relevant curriculum and a say in matters concerning student and faculty participation. It was an exciting time indeed and in those three years I lived and learned about education in an active and participatory manner.

I actually got my doctorate in education after three years. . Jeff and I quickly got married in order to get me into Canada and we arrived bright eyed and bushy tailed with two faculty appointments at the University of Waterloo.in Waterloo Ontario.

I loved teaching whether it was to University Students or children. Teaching was my gift and working with young aspiring teachers or social workers was an enjoyable activity for me. But I found the university a stifling and non-creative atmosphere with hypocritical rules and regulations for promotion that I could not comfortably live with.

Who wanted to write articles in journals no one read anyway? Who wanted to limit participation to boring faculty meeting when the community was beckoning for help.?

In all my University experiences the rhetoric and the reality never matched. There was no congruence between the lofty phrases of "community of scholars", service to the community and real life. Those who got ahead went to all the right and the many many meetings, wrote jargon filled papers, and played their good faculty games.and roles.

If I had wanted to I could have played the tenure track game but I never really wanted tenure that badly . I kept teaching and reaching out to the community. I was always too involved with my students

and their struggles and so I stayed as an assistant professor forever and ever until I got fed up.

After another stint as an assistant professor at York University I was terminated due to budget cuts. I then launched one of the first wrongful dismissal cases at York University .then Dean of the Faculty of Education I had been treated like a tenure track professor, was teaching graduate courses and indeed my name had been used to get money to launch a new graduate program. But when the crunch and budget cuts came I was expendable.

Undaunted I fought back and won a one year salary settlement .This settlement was to launch the next exciting phase of my work life. With the one year salary in hand I went to the National Institute on Mental Retardation and part of the Canadian Association for Community Living. They had their offices right on the York Campus and I had gradually gotten to know the exciting group of scholars and activists gathered there ..

I admired the two heads of the organization at that time Hugh Lafave and Jacques Pelletier and they offered me a position as Visiting Scholar. The first years salary was already covered (compliments of York University) and so I was launched. For the next several years I was to be part of the most exciting era in the history of the Institute an era that gave birth to the People's First Movement (an advocacy movement run by people labelled Mentally Handicapped) and the Integration Action Group (a grass roots parent movement run by parents and advocates).

York had also been underpaying me grossly as they did all their female faculty and this too became part of my settlement. The \$10,000 raise went to pay my salary and expenses at the Institute. It was definitely a good move in many ways and it broke me out of the University mentality I was starting to get into. At the Institute I was to work regular hours and I didn't have the summer off. I became more like a worker and less like a professor It was good for me to be back in the real world.

It was at York that I first met Judith Snow (the subject of many of my other writings) who has played a major force in shaping my life both personally and professionally. Judith and I were both professional working women at York and both struggling with the

predominantly male white paternalistic attitudes that existed. Judith was the director of the Centre for Handicapped Students.

To compound this further Judith was also labelled as disabled and had to put up with this double burden. To make an incredibly long story very short I became Judith's friend and got involved in her struggle to flee the nursing hospital that at that time was her actual home. This ensuing struggle was to change the direction of my life and work and was the beginning of Judith becoming one of my dearest friends and colleagues.(see appendix for further references on Judith's life).

Through the years and through the struggle to free Judith from the constraints of the society that was her real handicap , she and I began to give courses and workshops in Toronto and indeed throughout the country and the U.S.

It was in these courses that two strategies emerged that we use in our courses today -- MAPS and CIRCLES OF FRIENDS.

MAPS was born in the summer of 1987 at McGill University and was originally called the McGill Action Planning System. That changed to Making Action Plans after we wrote the book ACTION FOR INCLUSION (see appendix).

What strikes me so much about the work that I do today is the positive energy exhibited by families who have children that many would hide or institutionalize. These families truly love and accept their children for WHO THEY ARE. I am drawn to the love and acceptance of these families and I stand shoulder to shoulder with them as they fight the system to demand their children have rights at home, at school, at work and at play.

Both Judith and I played an instrumental role in getting the Integration Action Group off the ground, but once again I almost fell in to the trap of doing too much and getting swamped by the demands of families who needed someone to laugh and cry with.at all hours of the day and night.

Many of the families I met in the beginning days of the Integration Action Group expected me to be there at any moments. My phone rang incessantly with crisis calls in the evening, on weekends etc.

I was also not allowed to exhibit anything but goddess i.e. perfect behaviour. If I wasn't always available people became angry and if I made mistakes or was tired, others felt betrayed. .

I explored these dynamics with Paul as I was getting more tired and feeling overwhelmed by the demands placed on me by these "wonderful" people.

Paul helped me see that I put no or little boundaries on what I do. I allowed everyone to in the words of a D.H. Lawrence poem "peck away chunks of my flesh." This I began to see as MY problem ,not theirs. It was I who was not setting limits . It was I allowing myself to once again get used.

This time I caught myself in time and gracefully bowed out of the leadership of the Integration Action Group, I left it at the right time in the able hands of a group of marvelous people.

This past year at their fifth annual meeting I received a beautiful token of their appreciation for five years of work. The carved stone statue of a circle of people holding each other in a ring ,stands proudly on my piano in Toronto as a symbol of my contribution to these parents. I truly feel their love and appreciation for my work.

Now there's something really new - me actually wanting to be appreciated for what I do and not being taken for granted. I pride myself on never taking anyone else for granted. I who send thank you cards ,letters of appreciation, birthday and anniversary notes etc ,finally have demanded a little appreciation for myself. It's a lovely feeling. It is not allowing myself to be a doormat.

I was trained well in this area by my mother who taught me "never to go to anyone's home empty handed." and "It doesn't take a long time to remember to be thoughtful." It makes me sad that after all the cards and notes and flowers she sent to so many, that she doesn't receive much in return today. She never demanded anything back and annihilated herself in the process of too much giving. I learned her pattern well. I left two marriages with literally nothing in my hand financially and with few material things.

Today, although Jack and I are not burdened by "things" ,we have collected a marvelous array of folk art from all over the world, I treasure all the little notes and pictures Jack has drawn and given to

me and he never forgets birthdays and anniversaries because I don't let him.

Instead of waiting to be hurt or to say, "You forgot!" -- I send messages for weeks before events to remind Jack how important it is for him to remember me. He has broken some of his typical patterns and has become a thoughtful person who calls if he's going to be late, who sends me little hand made notes and surprises me quite often with lovely flowers for no particular reason at all..

I don't ever want to stop being a GIVER ,but I do want to ask for something back and that something is THOUGHTFULNESS . This is a commodity that costs very little. I don't require expensive trinkets . A bunch of wild flowers is as wondrous as the florist's bouquet, but it is truly the thought that counts and the thought legitimizes my fullness as a human being who deserves to be loved.

BASIC BELIEFS

I wouldn't bother writing this if I didn't have a basic set of beliefs . I believe that everyone can grow and change at any age..I believe the world will, can, and does change. How, I often wonder, can anyone live in the twentieth century and not see change all around them.

I am for example sitting here in this old Ontario school house surrounded by a Macintosh SE computer, an Image Writer II printer and an auto-logic Panasonic phone-fax machine.

It was only 66 years ago on Dec. 17,1903 that the Wright brothers made their famous flight and on July 29,1969 Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. Concord jets can get across the Atlantic as fast as I can get from Toronto to Vancouver Women do vote now and modern capitalism has replaced feudalism in most parts of the globe. Why do so many people think this is the end of it all.and that more progressive change isn't possible for them or for their world.

I believe strongly that progress is the key and that in spite of the technology we have to totally annihilate the planet that same technology can be used to serve and advance our society and to create a world in which hunger,povertry and disease will be relics of the past.

I often wonder why some people see the glass i.e. life half empty while I see it half full. How does it serve to see life as half empty? For example -- I am 47. I could think of myself as old with only a few years to live and dream of retirement and spend my life planning how to slow down. OR, I can choose to see myself on the verge of at least another 40 years (which will take me to 87) when I will most likely be ready to think about leaving this great green earth along with Jack.and becoming a loon in Algonquin Park.

My God what grand things can (and will) happen this next 40 years. Just think of all the adventures yet in store, the delicious and yet untasted food, the wonders I haven't seen yet ,as well as the triumphs and tragedies that will of course happen in the course of daily living. Now I am consumed with thoughts of living instead of the incessant and annoying mosquito like death thoughts that took up too much time in my first 40 years.

Yes indeed, I can change, you can change and the world will and is changing!!!

SAN FRANCISCO DECEMBER 1990

There are moments that are watersheds in one's life. The date Dec. 9, 1990 stands as just one of those dates. for me. A year before, at the Chicago TASH (The Association for the Severely Handicapped) Conference, Lou Brown one of the major leaders in the field of education asked me if I would do the next keynote at the California TASH conference. in Dec. 1990.

Me, speak in front of 3000 people. Terror (and excitement) raced through my body. I was thrilled!! Here I was being honoured with the keynote in front of my peers -- the very people I loved and admired the most professionally .. All my friends and colleagues would be there. What an opportunity! What a chance! OH MY GOD!!!

Jack, Judith and those closest to me were totally relieved on Dec. 10 when the "dam speech" was finally over. I had driven at least ten people crazy all year terrified about how I would do it, what I would say, would I be OK, would I fall flat on my face, would I die of stage fright??? My recurring nightmare was of me standing up in front of 3000 people and fainting dead away...

I realized quickly that the speech was becoming a symbol symbol for me. Could I to stand on my feet in front of the group I cherished the most and make the personal and professional statement I wanted to. My fear was whether I could be true to myself, ("this above all to thine own self be true") whether I had the guts to do the keynote in my style, as I wanted to and whether I would live up to my own expectations.

I was not as worried about the OUT THERE as the IN HERE. It was me that was setting a standard for my next 40 years. The speech was the new challenge and the next step out of the comfort zone for me.

I thought and thought and changed my ideas a million times. The months flew by. The death threats and the Frontier crisis made my mind less preoccupied with the TASH conference.

But the date arrived. I had beginnings and ending for the speech. I had middles I had a new slide show and ideas on end but I had no

speech. I knew in my heart that as with all my talks it would take shape the night before the conference .or so I hoped.

The conference began and the day before my talk 20 women were viciously murdered in Montreal in an outburst uncommon in Canada . It was the work of a crazed anti-feminist male .

Also.,Tracy LeQuyere, who was to attend TASH as a speaker and friend was stopped at the airport and blocked from entering the U.S. because he was an ex-con. Tracy was stopped for no earthly reason and taken out of the Toronto airport in shackles and chains.

My friend, the poet Robert Williams, and his group of musicians were to play and read Bob's poetry to a small group at TASH and I suddenly got a brainstorm -- Why not let everyone hear this new and moving group of young poets and musicians,? Why not incorporate them into my keynote.? Wasn't I the one who felt everything must be done in teams - that no one could do it alone.? It was time to put my money where my mouth was.

And so I did not do my keynote alone.

Judith Snow, Rose Galati and Jack Pearpoint sat on the stage with me. At some key point Judith would speak as part of my message.

We began. I introduced Dave Hasbury who read a note from our friend Sherry about the murders in Montreal. There was a moment of silence and then Bob and his musicians read s Bob's miraculous poetry (add a poem).

The first ovation.

Then I started. I forgot my slides and my notes. I went from the bottom of my guts and said this talk is about **NO MORE SEGREGATION**, its about love and acceptance and a new way of being together. I was definitely on a roll.

At one point I stopped and looked out over the throng of people in front of me. Many were my dearest friends. My heart was singing as I said, "I can't believe I have spent a year being terrified of doing this. I love it up here. I love all of you and I love TASH". Ovation

Judith came forward and spoke of our relationship, of love . When you say the word disabled you wipe out the word person..The labelling is the problem not the person She was, as always ,profound.

Then I showed an empty chair. I said "this chair is for my friend Tracy who wears an invisible label on his forehead because he has been in prison. We label him ex-con. He is like Becky and Katherine and Maria and Felicia and all the children who wear their labels in their being. He and they are the same. Indeed, we are all the same. We all want love,acceptance and a chance to belong.

I was singing my heart out. I was being me in front of 300 people. I had graduated this day into my full flown being.

For a finale I had decided on doing something I had seen at Enosh Gaster's orthodox bar mitzvah . The women in the congregation threw candy as a symbol of the sweetness and joy of life. I had talked of struggle and I wanted to end my talk and speak about hope and joy. Several of my friends (men and women) assisted me in throwing candy at an audience already standing on their feet!

I had hit the right chord and after years of somehow holding down the real me, I emerged full force that day in San Francisco -- On the stage with me were my dearest friends. In the audience with me were people who had struggled and helped Jack and I through a year of incredible pain and anguish.

Jack and I knew more than anyone that when we as a society put labels on young people and send them to jail,we put a death sentence on them and on us...When we take children without families and put them in foster care, when we turn the other cheek and let children suffer in the name of neatness,or bureaucracy or special education those same children will want to kill us or kill themselves.

We had lived a nightmare the previous year and instead of bitterness and hate we had come out strong champions for making a better society. .Although the pain and fear of the last year was not over even as we got on the plane for Bangkok - it was in a way over ,for we had spiritually conquered our fear and were literally stepping onto another continent to think through the next phase of our lives.

2 ROLES-2 PARTS

two roles, two parts
have been fighting inside of me
like a seesaw
tearing and clawing to
let me be free

the shoulds were killing me
tearing at my heart
imprisoning me in a traditional role
restricting my soul

longing to break free
aching to break out
i needed to run, scream, shout --
to kill those voices
judgemental
critical
strong
to tell those voices
"you are wrong!
leave me alone!
let me sing my new song
let me be free
please
get out of me."

in december i stepped on that california stage
full of passion
joy
rage
then to asia flew
with you

i said goodbye to the past
at long last
kissed it fondly goodbye
let it die
with a sigh

now i'm moving on without fear
brave and clear
without that old and paralyzing fear

i don't know exactly where i want to go
i truly don't know
the answer will appear
it's getting more clear
i take it now day by day
starting to see another way

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

As I travel around the country doing workshops, I am always asked to do the Circle of Friends exercise. It is a simple yet powerful tool that makes each of us think about the people in our lives and what would happen if those people weren't there.

I invite the reader to participate in this activity Do it alone or with family and friends ..It is an excellent exercise for teachers to try with their students.I particularly love doing this with children.

The Circle exercise comes out my direct experience of building the Joshua Committee -- Judith Snow's support group that became a true Circle of Friends.What we learned was that particularly in a time of crisis no one can survive without a circle of friends.(see appendix from Perske's Book).

In many countries today especially in Asia and Africa where the family structure is still not as fragmented as in North America, the Circle is still the family. But in North America ,where many of us are literally thousands of miles from our nearest relative, loneliness is often our biggest problem. Millions, in epidemic proportions, turn to substance abuse, suicide or illness instead of reaching out and uttering the magic words PLEASE HELP ME.

I have done hundreds of Circles in schools with children who are far less inhibited in doing this than adults. The children get into the exercise right away . They know, especially after age ten , that social relationships are what really matters in their lives.

As teachers, doctors, social workers, therapists etc we are often so caught up in finding the CURE for everything and anything, ,that we lose sight of the major problem. In many cases, we find that serious school behaviour problems come when a child or teenager has no family and often no one in her/her life to call a real friend.

The strategy then is to begin to build a circle ,not to take more pills, get more behaviour management technicians or see a doctor.

Now it's your turn.

You see on this page four circles.

Focus on circle #1.

This is the inner core.

Who is in your inner core? your inner heart.? Who are the people you are really close.? It could be one person or two. it could be four--there's no right and no wrong. It can include animals, spirits of people, yourself, God etc.

Here's how some people have answered:

"I've put Maria, my wife, and our two daughters Julia and Sarah."

"I've got myself, God and my favorite Aunt Tanya."

"I've put my husband and my dog."

"I wrote down my parents,(who are both dead) my brother, and my teacher.

Now list WHY you put these people there.

Here are some other's responses.

"I know all the people in my first circle will forgive me for anything I do wrong."

"These people love me totally for who I am."

"I would die without the people in my first circle."

"I can talk to the first circle people about anything, I can laugh and cry with them, and I know they'll never leave me."

OK. Now move to the second circle.

These are close friends, relatives, pets etc but not quite as close as the people in circle #1. Write down the names of your second circle people and why you put them there.

Examples:

The third circle is a little different and can include groups associates, friends and also individuals.

List your third circle candidates and why.

"My bridge club, my women's United Church group. the teachers at my school and several good friends who live far away but who are really important to me."

"I'd have to say my hockey team, my son's hockey team, my cub scout troop, and all my relatives who I see may once every few years."

The fourth circle...

The Fourth circle is the paid circle or as I often like to call it the DOLLAR\$\$\$Circle. Who do you pay to be in your life? Examples include, doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, therapists, housekeepers, dentists, etc.

Have you completed the circles. Have you gone back and made sure you didn't forget anyone. Yes, sometimes people can be in two circles. For example my doctor is a paid person i.e. 4th circle and is also in my second circle as he is a close personal friend.

Stop and think for a moment.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM DOING THIS EXERCISE.? DID YOU HAVE ANY INSIGHTS ON YOUR LIFE? JOT THEM DOWN.

When I first did the exercise I realized I had totally left out my biological family. Over the years they came back into the circle as I dealt with my anger and fear. Now they are in circles two and three and in many ways my mother and father are in the first circle as they have played such a critical role in my life.

Many who do this exercise come to interesting and often shocking realizations. For example in workshops these statements have been made.

"Oh my God ,my husband isn't in the first circle."

"I just realized that no one from my church is even near my circles."

"My son is in the first circle but not my two daughters. That's interesting."

"I have no friends. The only people in my life are my family."

And so it goes.

THE PROFOUND LESSON OF THE CIRCLE

We have learned the lesson of the circle and its impact by particularly looking at the lives of people in institutions of any kind. From there we looked at the implications of the CIRCLE for all of us.

The more a person is at risk, the more likely it is that his/her circles are empty except for the fourth circle. As we study the circles of children and adults with disabilities we find that the fourth circle is filled with therapists, doctors, dentists, group home managers, baby-sitters, nurses etc and that life in the inner core is empty.

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU HAD NO ONE OR HARDLY ANYONE IN YOUR FIRST TWO CIRCLES?

MAKE A LIST OF WORDS.

The following list is from a group of 12 year olds

empty and lonely
I'd feel stupid."
"I'd want to die"
old
left out
in prison
useless, scared and sad
angry
like I'm a nobody
depressed

OK. That's how you'd FEEL now how would you act i.e. WHAT WOULD YOU DO? Make a list of your words.

Here's the grade 7's list:

I'd hit, kick, scream and bite."
"I'd commit suicide"
I'd stay in bed all day and hide."

"I'd try to do anything to get attention"

I'd steal.

I'd kill someone."

Those in our society who have the emptiest circles are the people we value the least These include old people, people with disabilities, men and women in jail, poor people, native people, low paid workers, people on welfare, people out of jobs, people on the street, etc.

You can be assured that when a person initially attends Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or most self help groups they have no one in their lives. The idea of the AA sponsor is a brilliant way to start filling up the circles.

In my work with hurt and abused children , I start with the assumption that till the circles are filled ,I or others can do little work on the academic front. The circles being filled are the pre-condition to learning.

I have taught many adults to read and write at the age of 35 and over. They couldn't read before not because they didn't have the ability, but because they had no one in their lives they could trust. Because they were pitifully lonely. Because they believed they were worthless and stupid. As the tutor starts to work with the person and the person meets others who are struggling too, than miracles can and do happen

Friendships don't grow overnight, but the goal of Circle Building is to start the process.

Many so called "normal" people in our society also have a lack of closeness in their lives. They turn to alcohol and drugs to fill the void. Take a cold hard look at your circles. Do you need more people in your life?. If your answer is yes start tomorrow and phone one person. Invite someone into your life. They may say no. Try again. I guarantee you that several people will respond to your call. They will say yes because chances are they are lonely too. Take a risk. Write down one phone number and call tomorrow,...better yet stop and call now.

The lesson is simple, the meaning profound. We know from the research on infant deprivation that babies who are left alone , who

are not held cuddled, loved - who have no intimacy in their lives, DIE. This is also true for adolescents and adults. It is true for you and true for me. Without love we get sick and die.

So much illness is caused by miserable marriages, unhappy people with unfulfilled lives. The traditional medical establishment and the traditional educational scene don't dig deep enough beneath the surface to see this deep spiritual malaise.

When people lack love, trust, intimacy -- they get sick, they act strange and often they hurt themselves and others.

Loving people who have full circles are not the deathmakers. These people are the lifegivers, the music makers, the explorers, the healers, the advocate professionals, the gardeners, the bread bakers, the book writers.

If your circles are empty or not full enough that is the place to start. As the circles fill out so will your health improve, your relationships strengthen and your "garden will flourish."

The only way to begin is to begin. I wish you luck and I wish you full circles.

THE TOUCH OF THE POET SYNDROME.

I must admit, it has been in New York City that I have seen the greatest theatre in my life. Spine tingling goose bump making theatrical events. One in particular stands out as it is so relevant to the topic of this book.

My mother picked plays well. Whenever Jack and I visited in New York, my Mom would get great tickets for outstanding plays. The night of "Touch of the Poet" by Eugene O'Neill stands indelibly etched in my brain and heart.

The cast was stellar. Jason Robards, Jr., Milo O'Shea and Maureen Sullivan. The theme was illusions in families and how these illusions once shattered can splinter the lives of everyone involved.

In the play the father is a strutting peacock type braggart who runs a tavern. He brags about everything including his exploits in the war.

He generally has grand dreams and plans for his life. His wife, a simple and loyal innkeeper, fuels his fantasy life and plays along with his dreams and illusions. But their daughter can no longer stand the posturing of her father and so one day in a fit of rage she tells him the truth in a double barrelled explosion. He is a fraud, he has never seen a war, his dreams will never come true. On and on till her father is quite literally on his knees.

The daughter is now free to move on. It is her long suffering mother who must deal with the shattered remains of her husband. She understands that he has lived so long on his fantasies that he is a shell without them.

The daughter takes no responsibility for her tirade and its results and is off to make her own life leaving the mother with the job of family reconstruction.

I was weeping. as I watched the drama (my drama) emerge. Sitting next to my mother ,who was already beginning to suffer from extreme nervous tension and ,anxiety I wept. She thought I was weeping for the beauty and brilliance of the play. That too. But most of all I was weeping for my mother, for her lost dreams, her un-lived fantasies, her illusions about my father and how happy we three had been together.as the perfect little family.

I wept silently. Jack knew exactly how I was feeling as he saw much of his own family in the play. It was a play truly about us all. Great plays are made that way. They talk to the universal theme of life, loneliness and love in all of us.

I knew then and there that night that the most powerful act of love I could give my mother was not to ever tell her the truth. No matter what she did or said. No matter how angry I got I would never break her shell. I was in truth ,not willing to pick up the pieces. She had suffered too much as a child, as a wife and mother .She had suffered too much disappointment. She had made her choice.s I too was making a mine.

I wanted and demanded to live fully without any illusion. I would allow my mother to keep hers and not intrude where I was not welcome.

This was a sacred vow and one I have never broken even under the most severe stress.

I can write this book now as my mother cannot read it. She would in a way be proud for to get a book published for being successful is a good thing. I can also now proudly dedicate this book to both my mother and father as they were the ones to give me the precious gift of life and as well as the tools and foundation to lead me forward into my new life.

"Touch of the Poet" serves as a good lesson for us all. People as adults make the choice to live with reality or fantasy. I can help those who choose reality for they often need a guide and a listener to help them along on their journey. But those who choose illusion must also be respected. No one can be led where she does not want to go.

I remember this wonderful greek legend. C

"Come to the edge," said.the appolinaire.

"No I can't I am afraid."

Come to the edge," she said.once again.

"No, I am afraid, I will fall."

"Come to the edge," she urged one final time..

And I came, and she pushed me , and I FLEW.

According to the legend if you ask someone more than three times to enter fully into life you are an intruder.

I take that rule quite seriously in my personal and work life. I invite people to come to the edge and many come. I am also learning when to back off and not intrude. I do not intrude on my mother. I do respect her choices as long, as she no longer can to hurt or destroy my desire to fly.

This journey has taken many years and it is not over yet. I am just a beginner at flying. Wait till you see me in ten years.