

FROM B.C.
with
LOVE



LYNDA ROY

Lynda Roy

From B.C. With Love
(A True Tale Of Friendship)

From B.C. With Love: biography, true story

ISBN 978-2-9814707-1-3

Cataloguing in Publication
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2015

Cover design by Hélène Carrière

Montreal (Quebec)

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In dedication to Cyril, Philip and Mike

“Ceux qu’on aime, on ne les juge pas”
- Jean-Paul Sartre

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Prologue

This is a true story about a “magical” kind of love. In a day and age overshadowed by despair, it gives one hope and belief in “miracles”, deepening our connection to others; enriching our lives.

It is a family story about hope and love; the legend of an ordinary man, named Cyril. In a bond between family, friends, strangers and an extraordinary dog “Fred”, their incredible journey comes full circle.

The events that took place on earth are the mirror of images sent down to us from heaven. A result based on beliefs that people care for one another.

Introduction

"When you can tell the story and it doesn't bring up any pain. You know it is healed"
- Iyanla Vanzant

On December 8th 2009, my brother's seven year old "Kugsha", Fred appeared in headlines throughout the media in Canada, USA, and as far as Taiwan. Few had even heard of a "Kugsha". A nationwide attempt to bring him back home reunited family, friends, and perfect strangers during a sad Christmas season.

This is our story.

The words repeated endlessly, like a needle stuck in the groove of a vintage record playing the same section over and over again..."What happened..." and "how did it all start". The unknowingness of where to begin had been the hardest part of the answer.

When Philip died, a growing silence surrounded his death. It took seven years to bring up the subject to my older brother, Cyril. My intentions of writing a way out of the depths of sorrow brought me to a halt, so I urged him for his input. A letter arrived shortly after, boxed-in painful emotions hidden deep. I did not pursue the project.

Years later, when Cyril died, the idea haunted me again. At first self-hatred set in. Then came the stinging regrets of the "could have's", "would have's", and "should have's". In all honesty, I blamed myself for what happened.

An introspective need of finding a way out of this all-consuming grief turned to writing.

Eighteen months after the book was well under way, I discovered a letter hidden in an old magazine - Cyril's wish!

Therefore, here is to you, "*Dear Brother*", a tribute to your life!

Cyril

"Truth is Stranger than Fiction"
-Mark Twain

Scorpio: Survivor of continuous struggles between soul and individuality, symbolizing death and reincarnation.

I agree with Cyril, "Truth is stranger than fiction". What better words chosen to represent his story. He had posted it on his MSN profile. Although he had self-defeating moments, he had faith in himself always believing it best to follow his heart and soul.

In 2008, in a period of discomfort, Cyril came to live with us. He helped me let go of the secret that dominated our lives. I (the controlling perfectionist) refused recognition of "the secret of the past" as a problem of my present. It was the first step of healing.

Recovery started with overcoming the anger before seeing any light of "forgiveness". Cyril had been miles ahead of me on healing his soul. I feared rejection of others and still have difficulty in saying the word "addict", but it is what most precisely describes "the secret"

Grieving existed long before the loss of my parents or brothers'...long before death; unconsciously, grieving over childhood. Waves of tears have swept through my body like a virulent poison. However, some of my siblings have suffered worse.

To heal from an emotion, you must feel it. I refused to give that deep broken-sadness throughout life much reflection until now. Feeling the emotions hurt too much. After Cyril died and Fred became headline news, his death triggered feelings of abandonment. Holding onto Fred had a self-soothing purpose of some sort. What appeared insurmountable (Fred's rescue) gave me the opportunity of progressing through my recovery in ways beyond what I believed possible. It happened when my "inner child" needed the blanketing kindness and compassion of others.

Five small boxes and an old second-hand guitar were the remains of his 58 years of existence. Within one were childhood photographs, his "Twenty-Four Hours a Day", a book in which he highlighted many passages intended for members of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous). In another: his music, an empty wallet (very much like him!), a watch bigger than his wrist, Dad's war medals, some hats, and a wedding band. Those contents were of faint importance. What counted the most could not be packaged - the gift of love and his dog, Fred!

My older brother taught me two important life lessons. One: "Follow your heart". Two: "Love is meant to be shared" - a blessing of loving-kindness!

The first six siblings of our family were born between 16-24 months apart. I (Lynda) came second, then Stephen, Ann, Philip and Karen. There was a large sibling-gap between the seventh born (our sister Yanic) who arrived 19 years after Cyril. We were more caretakers to her than siblings were. Psychologists say that 2 years is the worst age gap because of the competitive streak between siblings. Well, we had plenty of time to fight yet Cyril never lost his older-brother protectiveness.

Cyril, a fearless, amicable, easygoing guy just one of those people once you meet, you refuse to let go. His eyes, a celestial shade of blue, soothing and eternal like the sea, could penetrate your soul. There were no half measures - he liked you, or he did not. If he happened to be fond of you then he had no limits. His words were always sincere and straight from his heart. If you did him a favor Cyril rendered it twofold and more, never forgetting those who had been good to him. His loyalty could go as far as putting down his life in return. Proud, bullheaded, and stubborn as a mule - nothing stood in his way.

Life challenged him through sickness, pain, and poverty, yet he somehow got through the rough times. He pushed death to the limit living without illusions, fearlessly taking chances, exploring an undreamed future beyond what he had ever imagined.

I dare say our father's mindset had a huge influence on my brother who wanted to be like him: a leader, not a follower. The Air Force had muted within Dad as a flight navigator during World War II. His dominant leadership explained our unquestioning obedience and attitude. His military drinking took place within the "mess hall" on the Air Force base until 1945, when he received an honorable discharge. As he reintegrated civilian life, his habits changed; he found reasons to escape to the tavern instead. As a highly successful business man his "functional drinking" had been acceptable. We had a beautiful home and all the luxuries a family could want. Over the years, life wrapped itself in lies and became a horrid misery.

Mom, a charismatic, charming person, worked as a nurse. We saw her silver lining on good days.

She used alcohol to subdue her depression trading her booze for a bundle of Valium, binge drinking into oblivion, juggling "dry drunk" on Valium to "drunk" on alcohol. Cyril (age 10) and I (age 8) assumed the role of her accomplices, smuggling cases of beer in our little red wagon.

Hiding the evidence had been simple, hiding her drunkenness impossible. As a "closet drinker", Mom had a million efficient ways of disguising the act. Ingeniously, her hiding places included inside ventilation and toilet cisterns, behind wall panels, hidden in drawers and hamper baskets, in closets, under mattresses and above the ceiling tiles. Mom drank from the bottle in secrecy, camouflaged in a coffee cup or "Coca-Cola" making it indiscernible to others.

We grew up in the seeping chaos of an alcoholic household dealing with life's problems in different ways. Some wrote. Some fought. Some hurt on the outside. Others hurt on the inside. Consequently, Cyril drowned his sorrow in alcohol. And drugs resulted in the brutal death of our youngest brother, Philip. His body remained for days unattended as if the angels had left him behind.

The damages of alcoholism resembled radioactive waves. The intensity, absorbed quantities, and duration of exposure determined the degree of effects it had upon us. Each particle ingested or inhaled became dangerous. The raucous brewery smell combined with the aftertaste of sour bile and vomit flooded our noses in its' poisonous stench.

Who would believe that one day you could wake up with a chronic, lifelong disease that would radiate pain, shame, and guilt throughout everyone's lives?

Shame became an illness sown to our skin. A ponderous doom of decanting sorrow. It was a deadly wound that ruptured the spirit and transcended into solitude like a hidden thread in a tapestry. Shame is an insidious suffering from within that leaves you in the depths of pain. It transcends existence like a grueling desert left dry and naked from erosion. When shame is so profound, life loses its' meaning and the only thing left to reap is solitude. The isolation alone is enough to break your spirit down. It can make a difference between a person's stability and another's insanity.

"Alcoholism", is an understatement to the inability of functioning and caring for others, let alone for oneself. It is incredible how tolerant and steadfast we became with misery, withdrawing into a lonely shell. Perhaps this was a dignified manner of dealing with a "curse" nobody really understood.

There is a thin line between fear and respect of those affected. The mental anguish of the symptoms of distress creates an endless "death anxiety".

Although our parents refused to recognize liquor as a problem, presuming control at any given moment, they became physiologically and psychologically dependent.

In drunken stupors, their consumption led to warzones of family feuds. Tossed boiling soup and flinging bottles served as weapons. Once, in a fit of anger, Mom used a saw to cut her bed in half.

Quarrels were like cuts that would not heal.

Cyril built a wall around himself eventually stepping away to avoid exposure. Yet, the damages became evident within his incubation, resembling those following a "latent period" of emission.

Throughout uncertain moments, we struggled to preserve a routine yearning in despair. Being our parents "keepers", we decided on our own. At first Cyril and I shared the burden of the chores: missing school, cooking meals, purchasing food on a running bill, washing and changing diapers, bathing babies, and cleaning house.

My brother had added responsibilities. Dad used him as the medium to oversee the state of affairs. This double-sided sword granted Cyril a special "closeness" to Dad turning my brother into the "bad seed" for Mom. In a desperate attempt to relieve us, Cyril contacted him after her drinking binges, when Mom had the DTs.

Her withdrawal from alcohol had fatal adverse effects. Mom suffered from the most severe form, life-threatening delirium tremens (DTs); a sudden and severe mental and nervous disorder. Treatments required emergency hospitalization in intensive care (ICU). And weeks of absence from her children.

She had horrific hallucinations of hideous faces causing agitation and confusion. Clinging to us, her invisible demons rose from the walls whispering death messages. During those horror periods, we wanted to throw the covers over our heads and hide to shut out the magic spell that poisoned our existence. Through the eyes of a child, the barrier to the ghost world had opened to seize us as if wanting to exchange souls to bring us to the other side.

At the age of eight, in Ste-Rose, during a Christmas season (in the '60s) we watched in helpless fear as police and ambulance officials strapped Mom onto a stretcher. In a state of emotional disruption, she warned us to stay away from metallic objects and avoid the basement where multitudes of demons would hurt us.

That night had a huge impact on our lives as we boarded the patrol car, following the wailing sirens of the ambulance. The lights of the vehicle ahead faded in the dark and our route deviated, hell bound, to a foster home in Ste-Therese. Our loss never entitled us to any explanations. Induced with guilt we perceived this alienation as a punishment for something we said or did; believing we had behaved badly. The ruthless grab of authorities seemed just an afterthought for our safety. A cold wind stole the last of our smiles that shady, endless night, bound for damnation. Perhaps it was because we had not failed to see the difference between the goodness and wickedness of what lay ahead.

The loathsome, single-story farmhouse was uninviting. The veranda helplessly decayed from endless years of neglect. An insect-warped and rotted shed, surrounded by wire fencing stood at the far end of the yard. In the kitchen, a thick brown-leather belt hung on a hook by the back door.

Without ceremony, we barely uttered a word, removed our coats and boots, intimidated by our first moments in awkward surroundings.

Vows of silence were the laws of the house and failure to abide resulted in whippings with the strap. It was a fair game to discipline children. Paralyzed, we bowed our heads low, lacking spirit, craving to go home!

The morning after our arrival, our legal guardian escorted Cyril and Stephen into the shed. He carried a large knife resembling a hatchet. Cyril pleaded, but the man refused to listen. He picked up a chicken, laid his neck on the workbench; then with a swift blow, he cut off the chicken's head.

Unaccustomed, the slaughtering and gruesome image of a bloody, headless chicken had been an atrocity for the boys... an unforgiving worthless crime. Tortured by this shattering horror, they returned to the house in shock. That scene remained printed within Cyril's mind. He loved pets. To see one killed had been death-frightening! It left him confused and terrified. If this man dared kill an animal, what would he do to children if they failed to obey him?

Forced to be brave, refusing to die in the arms of the devil, Cyril began plotting our path out of hell.

We lost contact to family members after the authorities stepped in. Our custodians forbade us use of the phone. Penniless, we were unable to contact them from a public telephone booth even if one had been accessible.

Court orders prevented Dad from coming to our rescue and our maternal grandparents were unaware of our location. The tug-of-war raging between parents had served to alienate both sides.

Without our knowledge, our maternal grandparents took on a battle in a child-custody dispute. Their intervention (on behalf of Mom) had necessitated the services of a lawyer, Bernard Bourdon, a distant family member.

We counted our sleeps before scrambling home. Events happened on their own, like the dripping sound of a clock.

Did Granddad breach the court orders reclaiming us? It was never stated yet, it occurred unexpectedly.

Our footsteps painted deep tracks trespassing where no one had in the hard crushing snow. With barely a whisper, we squeezed into our Granddad's car, leaving no scent behind. The worst sight was seeing him cry. When

Granddad noticed the glances of six pairs of eyes in his rear-view mirror, he quickly looked the other way. Then, he bent forward in anguish hiding his face in the palm of his hands. With trembling shoulders, he released a burning hailstone of tears. For the longest time, we avoided his eyes. His tears rendered a torrid truth.

The snow squeaked like Styrofoam as we drove to the hospital where Mom had been undergoing electroshock treatments for the Dt's and severe depression.

It was just as well we were not permitted entering the hospital walls. The emotional burden would have been unnecessarily cruel for us. We sat within the nauseating fumes of the car waiting for what seemed a very, very long time.

Grandmom's determination conjured a surefooted spirit vanishing into the stone gray building. She returned shepherding Mom. Then, as quietly as we had arrived, blinded by stuffy swells and a larva of longing, we drove off clinging to one another in a chorus of laments. In ignorant bliss, we chose to listen to the music of our souls concentrating on the luxury of broken stretches of time, when life offered Mom periods of sobriety.

If a home is about identity, then I suppose we had none. We had our own existence rarely living in one place long enough to become tangled within its' identity. We were not much of anything, no matter how far we looked back. Our lives had an invisible and marginalized feel. Some people would think we wanted to get away. It was only partially true. Invariably, the circumstances were not always what they appeared to be, it was the price we paid to remain invisible.

We moved continually mimicking tiny insects, adapting to just about anywhere, leading unobserved lives out of sight. Akin to their metamorphism, our home's exoskeleton changed like a resting stage before molting.

Predicaments tainted with lies tore us apart physically and emotionally. Not fully understanding the complexities, we hid in fear: sometimes from Dad; other times from outside authorities. Vigilantly, we observed as our silence converged into hushed careful conversations. We were naturally equipped being on our own dealing with the outcomes of life's difficulties.

The year's inched and past patterns of rage-filled moments nurtured the bitterness between parents, resulting in confusing confrontations. Time and proximity were monsters. New starts were a challenge, with rise and falls. Separations were synonymous with struggles, holding us captive. Cradling our emotional burden, we suffered vulnerability every time they occurred. The degree of loss during poignant detachments from parents and siblings left invisible scars.

The ruptures were easier when placed with relatives, although the emptiness remained, like a stubborn stain clinging to a wet garment.

Love prevailed as those hardships shaped our lives, built our characters, stripping us of our childhood.

The final family rupture occurred in '63. Dad officially announced his departure appointing 11-year-old Cyril, "head of the house". Unsited to reply otherwise, in boyish innocence, he honored a responsibility beyond his years.

Cyril wanted Dad to be proud of him. As a result, my brother masked the pain of rejection in solitude, unaware the unresolved issues of abandonment would drive him into a revolving door of failed starts.

Dealing with the collateral damage of alcohol abuse and separations weighted heavily. Those memories haunted us with shame and humiliation. Within an old forgotten wisdom, we believed in keeping “the secret” responding through painful silence, our emotions ranging in fear of abandonment, sadness, and guilt.

The inconsistent moments of abstinence occurred more frequently in the early ‘60s, only to slowly dissipate into periods farther and farther apart.

We recognized sobriety, as a gift of normalcy. Those days we treasured when graced with its presence. They made up for the weariness of the broken ones that left us bathing in feelings of exasperation and despair.

We loved and hated our parents. Their drinking made it impossible to face the emotional abuse. Blaming ourselves, we played the part of a co-dependant, criticizing their usage, trying to rescue them from the consequences. Either way, our noble feelings and actions backfired: they simply drank more. Feeling shameful, they would wake up to half days or half weeks, promising never to drink again. Eventually, we believed they loved the bottle more than they loved us.

Concepts of insobriety as a disease or an addiction had never occurred. We saw it as an escape; an escape from us and the responsibilities children imply. Living with alcoholics turned into a painful, confusing life spinning out of reality. Often, extreme emotions externalized blame projected onto others in an emotional turmoil from joyful celebrations to sadness and desolation.

Cyril’s inability to make sense of reality subsequently set the stage of his own mental health. His loneliness was a journey through a dark cloud stretching back to his earliest childhood memories. A period when Dad left and Mom disappeared, leaving us behind.

Rejection wrenches deep. Those painfully bleak memories of emptiness and abandonment defined who Cyril became as an adult. Feeling unloved led to a negative self-image. His broken spirit stopped reaching out to avoid the hurt. Even more so, the stress of the broken family led to devastating scars. This affected his vulnerability leading to a depression and an attempted suicide at 21.

Cyril broke away from family tension and feelings of disempowerment, spending time with family pets. He discovered animals to be a true source of unconditional acceptance and love. It made no difference, whether it was a dog, a duck, or any other pet: they bear no judgement, as they simply love you.

It all started with “Bullet”.

My brother had christened our first dog “Bullet”. He must have been five or six. The name was not a figment of his imagination and more than a figure hiding in his heart. Mesmerized watching “The Roy Rogers Show”, a Western television series his idol Roy Rogers, a legendary “Cowboy King” fought injustice, and practiced what he preached, “Good versus Evil”. In all likenesses, Roy Rogers and Cyril were the nicest people in the world! Roy owned a golden palomino, “Trigger” ... He had a partner, “Dale”, the Queen of the West... and a wonder dog, “Bullet”.

They had a perfect life... a dog and a horse!

We knew the theme song “Happy Trails” by heart: *“Some trails are happy ones, others are blue, it’s the way you ride the trail that counts, here’s a happy one for you”*.

In his imaginary world, within Cyril’s favorite game, he played the part of “Roy Rogers” while I became “Dale”. We wore toy silver “six-shooters” and cowboy hats running alongside our “Bullet”, pretending to save the innocent from the villains.

He was my hero, but I never told him - my champion and “rock” - caring, witty, and smart! We shared a rare sense of connectedness only a few lucky people ever have.

Cyril fought the battles of our broken home, defending his siblings. In the vein of “Roy Rogers”, Cyril enduringly tried to save those who were in trouble. Wanting to protect us, he forgot himself in the process. The pressure and the problems stole the peace within him.

Chambly, on the south shore of Montreal, was as close as we expected a place be described as “our home town”. It was probably the ceaseless urge of an adolescent wanting to know what it was like to have one. We romanticized about loving or hating it and yet more importantly, just being part of it and even missing it.

Teens our age rallied around picnic tables at “Chez Marius”, a side roads hotdog and hamburger joint along the waterfront. There existed no youth center to indulge and share in kinship and togetherness, other than “Chez Marius”. Here, we babbled away warming up to ideas, sharing friends, eating, watching minicar racing and playing pool in the building next door.

Once the coldness of winter permeated our bones, our attention shifted to the “Bar-B-Q”, a cheesy place across the road. The Bar-B-Q served French fries and a coke to the sound of the nickel-in-the-slot machines, while the boys played pinball. Sitting in the comfort of a booth, we selected our favorite hits: Paul Revere and the Raiders: “Louie Louie”, the Moody Blues: “Nights in White Satin”, Deep Purple: “Hush” or Eric Burdon and the Animals: “When I Was Young”.

The echoes of the rough garage sound of Cyril’s favorite “Wild Thing” resonated in his band practices for weeks in preparation of the amateur concerts. The boom of his teen spirited singing remained short-lived. Nonetheless, his dusty guitar connects times long past; like the souvenir of an old photograph, reminding me of whom he was and the girls he serenaded.

On February 12, 1968 with just enough money he walked to the bus station next to “Chez Marius”. Holding his guitar and a few precious belongings, he bought a one-way ticket to nowhere. Ridden with guilt for failing family togetherness (at age 16) he stepped away from a gloomy life of lies and broken promises, giving up on childhood dreams of unconditional love and security. Cyril always did his best forgetting himself, until that day.

He moved to Gatineau, into a boarding house adjacent to our aunt and uncle, Gaetan and Georgette (Dad’s sister). Roger (Dad’s brother-in-law) and Francis (Dad’s youngest sister) lived a few blocks away. As Alex Franzen would say, “they were polished opals in a pewter world”.

Until he graduated from high school, Cyril pumped gas at 10 cents a litre (Canadian) to the dinging sound of pneumatic hoses snaking their way across the pavement.

Bob Larocque (a distant cousin) gave him a summer job as an apprentice-building surveyor.

With a mind like a bookcase, he went on to postsecondary studies in management.

The next thing I knew he had a crew cut, locked into the “thousand yard stare”, lined alongside his comrades beaming beneath a bearskin hat and bright red jacket - his uniform regal and proper. He had signed into the Canadian Grenadier Guards (CGG).

At Parliament Hill in Ottawa, we attended the “Mounting Guards” ceremony with a drummer and pipe-band giving marching signals to the cavalry.

Cyril was twice a man in the Grenadier guards. They say, “Once a Guardsman, always a Guardsman”. The training and skills set him up for life giving him self-discipline and motivation. Nothing compared. He settled- in with his troop and commenced a routine of drills and physical training, adjusting into a lifestyle different from the one he had known. During the fittest time of his life and he was proud and happy. With his jaw taunt, he seemed to have grown three inches (7.62 cm) and put on some weight.

He shared a mystical sense of belonging to friends like Fred Caron, a member of his regiment. Fred reconnected with us when Cyril’s story made headlines a decade later. As a gesture, upon my brother’s death the June 2010 Newsletter of the Ontario Chapter of the Canadian Grenadier Guards Association printed, “*Gone on the advance party...Cyril Roy...we will remember them*”.

Cyril by no means earned a brilliant polished 28mm nickel-silver “Purple Heart” (awarded for being wounded or killed in action) or the “Victoria Cross”. He did not have a chest full of medals. My brother never went to combat yet; the mention of his name in the Newsletter had as great an impact as any medal soldiers receive.

I never understood why Cyril resigned from the Grenadier Guards. Approximately 2 years later, he joined Nielsen Canada, a marketing firm where a flowing paycheck allowed him to trade in his old Austin-mini for a beautiful new Chrysler. He became the envy of many. For us, he represented family pride.

I marvelled at the scene, as it appeared he had it all, until reality blew in...

Cyril vowed never to repeat the alcohol abusive lifestyle, but our parent’s genes embedded within.

At first, he enjoyed drinking. It was just a couple of beers; the next day, a few drinks with buddies and the following day, it gave him the drive to chase women. The merry-go round continued... over-and-over again. It made no difference what the occasion: a celebration, relief from stress, a moment of socializing; it just never ended.

Cyril fooled himself into believing responsible men like him were “functional drinkers” not problem drinkers. He had promised himself never to repeat the pattern. He was different. His job and family depended on him. Sometimes, he lost sight after all those drinks, using all the excuses imaginable lying and cheating.

As time went on, Cyril became obnoxious. He took on the personality of “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” drinking at work, hiding the bottles until he lost his job.

From the time I was too young to know, most of the girls had a crush on him. Women reacted to his “gentlemanly” conduct like a weather meter.

My brother married at 19. The birth of his son Jason highlighted his life.

One year, Aunt Francis brought Jason to meet Santa. He asked Jason what he wanted as a gift: “*A case of beer for my Dad*”, had been his reply!

With the excitement of a 4-year old, Jason affirmed: “Mom and Dad are getting together again!” It never worked out; Cyril missed the best years with his son...

He moved in with a new girlfriend, however, his hurtful behavior persisted for many years. Visibly, he camouflaged his abuse to those on the outside but we knew. The signs of an insidious, cunning disease were there.

His alcoholism progressed, disturbing those he loved. “Why he did what he did?” His reply would surely have been “*because of my parents!*” In a vicious cycle, Cyril drank so he could stop hurting. For the longest time he refused to take responsibility yet, he hated the reflection of the person he had become.

Drinking became omnipresent in Cyril’s life taking on a chaotic turn. With the intoxications came and went the loss of family, friends and jobs, bringing him from Gatineau to Montreal, then on to Windsor, Ontario... followed by Bathurst and St-John New Brunswick to his final destination, British Columbia.

Our mother's alcohol abuse phased into a more compelling disease (cancer) arousing sympathy and respect from family and peers. It gave Mom’s condition justice for the suffering and lack of empathy faced under the ugly label of “alcoholism”.

Death sat among us like a guest in our house before folding its wings around her. We knew that day would eventually come like a wise old owl in the dark, descending when we least expected it. On the evening of Sunday, September 12, 1976 her spirit returned to heaven before anyone said goodbye.

The world seemed so different in so many ways before that eternal silence that locked us into tears. Despite her hidden sufferings, Mom was all we had. If we would have had a single wish of being able to bring her back, this is the dream we would have picked.

Our hopes stifled into a lonely low.

“Alcoholism can be fatal killing one person in three. Symptoms include hallucinations and nightmares; increases in body temperature, spiking blood pressure, racing heartbeats, and breathing difficulties. In severe cases, it causes, seizures, shakiness, strokes, cardiac and respiratory arrest, and even fatal dehydration. The most severe form of withdrawal is the delirium tremens (the “DTs”). Left untreated, they have a mortality rate of up to 35%”.

Mom had all the symptoms binge drinking. This was not the first time, only the last.

Alcoholism lacked the “dignity” of cancer and heart failure, although related to the cause of her death, in the end alcohol abuse is what had a net effect on the two diseases.

When a parent dies, you lose everything. We lost what remained of our home. Her death was a crown of thorns, turning into a prolonged recovery, leaving us numb for years. In a bone-crushing sadness, we believed we were partially to blame for her fatality. Our ages ranged from Yanic (6), Karen (16), Philip (17), Ann (19), Stephen (21), Lynda (23), and Cyril (25).

Sober, Mom had been the most dedicated, loving person. Bereaved by the tragedy of her death, we mourned . We did what we could, grieving gracefully to ease our suffering, but we were powerless to stop it. Thrown into a world to fend for ourselves, what remained of the family dissolved.

Like a healing balm, we vanished in opposite directions, avoiding expressing our feelings to one another. The stinging memories of the good and bad moments, an empty house, never seeing her gray hair or, not having known her grandchildren remain to this day. The grief swallowed us whole.

Tragic moments have a goodness that shines down upon those in agony. There is often beauty that no one really understands when you are struggling with pain. Karen (our sister) had her own way of dealing with loss. Just after her 17th birthday (seven months after Mom died), she married Sherman. Three months later, she gave birth to their first daughter, Lanna.

Dad married Cecile in July ‘77. Ten months after Mom's funeral, Yanic (aged 7) went to live with them. Her biological father (Marcel) had not even attended the funeral preferring to simply step out of our lives the night death came to visit. There were no moments with his daughter after that day.

My brothers, Stephen and Philip, rented an apartment southwest of Montreal after the house sold. About a year later they went their separate ways yet Philip had difficulty living independently so, Cyril took him in. Fatalistically, foreshadowed by death lurking in the shadows, in '91 drug addiction took Philip’s life. The terrible tragedy left Cyril bearing failure once more.

Phil never got over Mom. Her casualty played a significant role in his struggles. After Philip found her body, comfort and support were not forthcoming or available. We relied solely on ourselves. Our emotions hidden under lock and key surrounded by steel walls. Phil kept everything inside, like a plague, leading to a trail of destruction turning to drugs.

Philip's death had psychological ramifications that were overwhelming for Cyril. As though insufficient just dealing with the loss of our youngest brother, Cyril had identified his remains. Removing the evidence of a violent death is the responsibility of the victim's family after the professionals have gone. Cyril accomplished the unimaginable task.

This fatality disturbed his equilibrium. It knotted his wounds into survivor's guilt and scars of depression spiraling from better to worse. My brother learned about sorrow more than he cared to. The meaning of life escaped him and Cyril's inability to voice his unhappiness made him hide behind alcohol more than ever.

Fallen moments are lessons within. Our lives are not always what we expect. Journeys in the midst of chaos fall short of perfection.

Glenda (Cyril's girlfriend) did like "Alice in The Looking Glass", running the farthest she could to escape from the black hole of destruction. No one could blame her. At first, Cyril protected his heart rationalizing yet, he desperately wanted to mend their relationship so; he drove out in the same direction (British Columbia).

He drew some wisdom from Philip's tragedy.

Philip's death served as a wakeup call. It made Cyril take a good look at himself and the person he had become. The event constituted the changes, which took place. Until then, Cyril lived the "Serenity Prayer" backwards, trying to change things over which he had no control.

Upon arrival in BC he rented a room from Gordie Shaw, who owned a house in Richmond. A mutual friend of Cyril's had introduced Gordie.

Cyril arrived intoxicated the first day he met Bill Sharp, the other tenant. Bill could smell the beer on his breath as he stumbled around the room, throwing one joke after the other in a rainbow of slurred syllables. He put Bill through the third degree on the subject of drinking to which Bill responded, "I quit". Managing some courage Cyril muttered, "I wish I could do the same".

Monday, Bill offered to take him to an AA meeting, although uncertain if Cyril was serious about quitting.

As pale, weak and skittish as a water spider, he walked into the doors of his first gathering. With the despair of a drowning man, he longed for freedom from the impulse. The progressive symptoms of the illness were killing him.

His drinking behavior took years to establish. There was no roadmap along his knotted course, just an awareness of a need for help.

Cyril expected to feel confident after the meeting, but a ponderous expression preoccupied his deeper thoughts. Making changes took patience. His recovery prevailed in a progress of a different mentality, focusing on today rather than tomorrow. On a bumpy road to a happier destiny, a single meeting was not the cure, only a choice and responsibility he owed himself.

Cyril unremittingly attended reunions. Bill sponsored Cyril because he accepted to do whatever it took to abstain from the booze. His friend cared enough to help him when Cyril no longer believed in himself. His story became inspirational. Bill sited it throughout the years to recovering alcoholics who alleged, they might fall short of kicking the habit.

Temporarily my brother worked nights as a security guard for an AA member, “Curly John”, until he joined the RCMP in Burnaby.

Pulling his life together reaping the profits he claimed Glenda to be his soul mate. A year later, they married at "The Chapel", a quaint old church in Richmond.

After the wedding, Bill and a dozen friends went to a dinner and comedy club known as “MAZ and Me”... It was a good time!

Cyril struggled, balancing work and sobriety. He carried the embittering gene of alcoholism. Without a magic pill, the prevention of relapse requires continuous work and professional help. Quitting was essential; everything depended on it. Changing negative behavior patterns remained a challenge.

My brother heard mixed reviews about an in-patient treatment center, the “Victoria Life Enrichment Society” (VLES), located on Vancouver Island. Cyril stayed for 28-days benefitting from the treatment where a metamorphosis took place.

Each day sober was a victory! On June 21st, 1993 the “AA Fellowship” served a cake. In a standing ovation, he received a medallion celebrating his first-year milestone.

Although AA was not a silver bullet, Cyril found recovery, dealing with his anger and resentments. Alcoholics Anonymous became a way of life, bringing on a completely new meaning. He lived by the motto “Stay sober under all circumstances”. Passing help along to others, he started his own AA group. At intervals, only a single member attended, but he still had the meeting, determined to make a difference even to a single individual was worth it.

Ann (our sister) witnessed firsthand this turning point in Cyril’s life. They met in 1992. Cyril had just come out of rehab.

The “Chateauguay Optimist Club” (in Quebec) needed someone bilingual to chaperon a group for a visit to British Columbia. Ann had volunteered.

Victoria blinked amid the view of the city skyline like fireflies in the distance. She arrived in August with eighteen students.

Exhausted, they headed straight for the hotel on arrival, closed the blackout room curtains, dozing off in preparation for the next day. A day Ann had long awaited. Excitement woke her as pale shafts of light peered through the open slit of the heavy draperies. Majestic Mt Douglas crept up in front of the window reaching to heaven.

After breakfast, the group hiked along a cliff, where the cry of soaring eagles echoed above a flowing river. A spicy aroma of cedar and spruce mixed with dried pine needles, cracked beneath every movement along the trail. She paused, taking in the woody scent pondering the beauty. No wonder Cyril claimed this as home. Wondering if they still had a connection, she imagined herself living there, close to him. Her knees trembled. Had he changed? She hoped her older brother would recognize her after 12 long years.

The week flashed by as if they had always been together. This occasion was as comforting as faith is to the believer. Within each moment, they found inner strength to endure memories of tragic childhood events, laughter healing their souls. The physical weight of sadness lifted temporarily; time to say hello, then good-bye, too quickly.

Cyril lived outside family longer than within. The dull ache of homesickness was trying at times. Some special friends like Mike McDonald filled the gap. Mike somehow brought out the best in Cyril.

They met while working in property management for the Federal Government of New Brunswick in the early 80's; Cyril worked under the tutelage of Mike as a building inspector.

I knew little about him except what Cyril avowed. Mike was ten years his senior. People describe him as a gentle, generous, subtle soul, his countenance always warm and open; just a really loyal person everybody loves.

His sister, Sheila says he is quiet, intelligent, yet compassionate; his emotions always close to the surface. You can imagine his solid stature chopping wood at Marmor; his silver head tilted to one side, showing a shy grin beneath a set of beaming eyes.

Cyril and Mike kept in touch, leaning on each other through good and bad times. In retrospect, Mike became a landmark to Cyril's trajectory during his time on earth. When Mike retired on Vancouver Island, fate encircled them again within its threshold. Their solidarity remained the ultimate sovereignty of friendship: profound, honest, and respectful.

In 1997, Cyril and Glenda drifted on to Hope, 154 kilometers (96 miles) from Vancouver, at the eastern point of the Fraser Valley in the lower mainland region. Hope is a gorgeous little town surrounded by the towering "Cascade Mountains". He managed a small motel while working for the member of the legislative assembly, Harry Lali.

From Hope he traveled into the bush to be with wildlife.

On a right-turn from Five Mile Road, past the spot where the Kettle Valley railway bridge stood until 1942, he discovered ghost-mining towns of Silverton, Sandon, and Tulameen (in the Similkameen Valley) gold panning along Granit Creek, across the bridge over the Tulameen River.

Along a fragment of trails, blistering Aspen leaves showered like gold dust, painting "Wild West" sceneries. Fable countryside from the days of cowboys and boyhood heroes like "Davy Crockett", "Roy Rogers", and "The Lone Ranger". Trailside cottonwood and Ponderosa pines yield to dilapidated log cabins dwindling to crumbs. These relics of yesteryears were now a fascination to our family historian, Cyril.

In the flurry of the Gold Rush in 1901, Tulameen sprang from nowhere. It had seven stores, two hotels, a saloon, and a post office. The buildings were now just sagging floors and sunken roofs.

He reveled in solitude found in tumbledown buildings as they captured his soul haunted by the sobbing murmurs of the legend of Tulameen.

Cyril's home – “Cowboy Country”

Latitude 51.9 - Longitude 124.6

*“Follow your bliss”
- Joseph John Campbell*

Originally in 1910, long before Via Rail assumed passenger services in 1978, you could hear noisy pistons spitting steam from the now-abandoned cliff hugging, Kettle Valley Railroad (KVR). The train carried the hopes of early settlers and miners, dreaming of a prospective future built of gold.

This “prospective future” is the same dream my brother carried within his heart. It gave him a reason to cling to its beauty, although there was no easy solution in-store.

The picturesque 280 mile-long KVR rail bed between Midway and Hope includes 18 trestles and 2 tunnels. On a perpendicular path to the summit, the trail scrapes the edge of the Coquihalla Canyon, near Hope. The highest elevation, the Myra Canyon is at 4100 feet (1250 meters). The KVR converted into a haven path for hikers and cyclists in the ‘90’s. This area in Northeastern BC is home to the densest black bear population in North America including, moose, coyotes, and other wildlife.

As the abandoned towns surrendered to the countryside, Cyril’s interest turned to the ranching heritage of the region. Its cowboys, wild horses, and red-coated cattle (Angus and Hereford) grazing the windswept hillsides.

He valued wildlife-friendly fences built of reclaimed materials as pieces of art in focus with time, revealing the heritage and nature of the land. Some had seen better days. Moss, lichen, wild weeds and vines, gave them character. Those pioneered remnants, weathered-gray, decorated the Chilcotin landscape, crisscrossing acres of fields. Curving through a friendly country road, the unwelcoming sight of barren posts crossed with barbed wire, confined horse, and cattle. They rarely elicit much enthusiasm from passers, yet they spoke to Cyril in the ambient silence of another era, beckoning him to follow the trail. Therefore, he did.

Cyril believed that new understandings and new beginnings were always a calling. The mountains were in his blood, making lonely periods easier. For once, he felt settled and whole. He lived nurturing not the life he had speculated, but the life he had. He trusted his intuition, taking chances, jumping fences, moving from Quebec to British Columbia.

Rustic living brought inner satisfaction and oneness with nature. In the bliss of solitude, tranquil moments weaved within the fabric of my brother’s life, allowing him to live from his own center. This land of gold held him under a spell. He met new people, took chances, and through the peaks and valleys nature’s appeal became “soul-cleansing”.

On a journey through the mountains and into his heart, his life brought him to the fire towers and an irresistible magnetism for the Seton Portage area. Here sweeping views of weather-beaten summits follow streams choked with salmon.

During a moment of pleasure, within his canoe, far across the aqua freshwater of Seton Lake, he posed with excitement. His line unfurling in agony. In the drag of the current, his bait battled the tackle in the hopes of escape.

Seton Lake stretches 20 miles through desert canyon, west of the roaring mighty Fraser River. The Canyon region is haunted with the spirit of ghosts who outnumber the living; miners from the hungry vintage days of the gold rush. Along the beach, those same miners planted sacred Acacia trees. The trees remain to this day. The “Trees of Life”, incarnating endurance and rebirth, diffuse an intoxicating sweet, fresh fragrance in the spring. In summer, pure minty-flavored foliage offers an airy lightness of shade.

Amidst the panoramic view, living nature in subliminal choral chants music through the passage of life, to the spirits who proceeded; waiting in transition on the other side.

Seton Lake was a perfect “*heaven on earth*” for Cyril....

Drawn to nature, Cyril pursued his dream... in wilder reaches.

My over-analytical, neurotic worrying rebutted all reasoning of living in a perfect little melancholic town within bear country, somewhere in the bliss of a slowed-down pace where everybody heats and cooks on wood stoves, in an isolated region far from amenities. Here every little detail is perfection - a pure sprawling land in devout worship of nature. With a palpable reverence, Cyril found Tatla Lake contagious as if he had passed through an invisible time machine, rewinding into a mystical era of cowboys, where legends are not just a mystery. They purchased a home in 2002, one-hour flying-out-time from Vancouver, on the western edge of the Chilcotin Plateau. The first habitants were Thule Inuit’s who crossed the Bering Strait thousands of years ago, accompanied by "special dogs".

Along a thread of road, 457 kilometers (285 miles) long, giant 12-wheel log loaders thunder Highway 20, also known as “Chilcotin Highway” or “Freedom Highway”; a road where your “*heart belongs in your mouth*”; a long lonely road on a foggy winter night.

Tatla Lake is where the pavement ends (400 kilometers) and the gravel begins. Population: 123. This tiny ranching community, between Bella Coola and Williams Lake, lies in the heart of the “Coast Mountains”, within lush meadows, rolling grasslands, and rocky walls of sandstone canyons surrounding a network of gravel roads.

Here "traffic jams mean three vehicles and the phone book is less than a page".

Hope's 10-bed hospital offered a 24-hour service whereas; Tatla citizens had no “9-1-1” until May 18th, 2005.

The hospital, grocery store, and fire station are a 3 1/2 hour drive into Williams Lake and the RCMP 1 ½ hours away.

If you bat an eyelash passing through, you could miss downtowns’ Tatla Lake; the gleaming roof of the Graham’s Inn and the adjacent pink motel, the general store-post office (where gas is sold only on weekdays), community center-library, and nursing station.

Across the highway, next to the motel, is a trail on top of a hill. Behind the fence is a bone-orchard cemetery with local markers dating to the 1800s.

Those without running water go to church and use the washing machine gossiping over scuttle-butting rumors.

The new school houses 42 students from kindergarten to 10th grade.

Dr Michael Smialowski needed a replacement upon retirement (Dec 31, 2013). No one showed interest practicing old fashion medicine, without x-ray or lab equipment. The only response came after a year's search from Dr. Rob Coetzee, who practiced in a harsh Antarctica expedition base for a scientific research team (SANAE). He works out of a trailer in Tatla Lake since spring 2014 caring for about 1,500 geographically dispersed Chilcotin patients, including many First Nations. A resident nurse and forestry helicopter assist him in cases of emergency. He is as fine as cream gravy!

Bears come by the bucket loads so dwellers dispose of garbage within landfill sites enclosed by electric fences about 20 minutes away. You must haul it yourself in this "off-grid community".

It is an abrupt end to dense civilization, beyond noisy streets, shopping malls, and skyscrapers replaced by a natural world filled with a capturing silence of wildlife. The area is an adventure for those dreaming of rodeos, ranches, Gold Rush trails, fly-fishing, hiking, and gold panning.

The local fair, early September, is like a family gathering with scarecrow, crosscut sawing, and tug-of war competitions.

Douglas fir, Sitka spruce and fertile cedar forests carpeted with giant maidenhair ferns and plenty of wild berries make Tatla Lake ideal. Golden eagles soar like haunting forest dwellers above an area inhabited by grizzlies, black bears, moose, cougar, deer, and wolves.

Nearby is the Bella Coola Valley, where bear watching is prime activity. The ridges of the "Wilderness Mountains" reaching 2,600 meters (8,530 feet) protect its' local rain forest from the winds. A mystical aura lingers in the silence of this rainforest where its' most sacred treasure resides. These are the grounds of the Kermode bears. Legends have cast a pall of mystery over their origins.

Imbued with a love of nature, Cyril's curiosity tempted him to explore the recesses within a paradise between the ocean and snow laden peaks. His solitude filled with a presence entering the portals of the forest. Spying through his camera, appearing at arm's length, was a hidden land of mighty carnivores. His heart skipped-a-beat watching bear's gather as "red-sockeye salmon set the table at low tide". An illegitimate spawning, like oil on water, hauls the magnificent bears to the shore. He envisioned becoming a "grizzly dinner". Hopefully the mountains would descend, reminiscent of a medieval drawbridge, allowing him an exodus to safety.

His eyes peeled for a sighting of the rare "Kermode" bear. They are the core habitants of the ancient rain forests in central coasts of British Columbia and some islands near Alaska. These tutelary deities possess a vital spirit according to Tsimshian First Nations. These "Spirit bears", known as "Moakshgm ol" have magical powers symbolic of strength and courage; created white as a reminder of the Ice Age.

I mocked this "Kitasoo" legend – forest folklore! The "Kermode" is not a polar bear, Native legend, nor an albino bear, as I had preconceived. Considered a "curiosity", a double recessive gene inherited from the parents gives the "mystical being" a cream pelt with eyes, nose, and paws pigmented as those of a black species. Families consist of white and black bears.

Cyril explained that mothers give birth in the spring to cubs weighting nearly ½ pound (0.226 kilograms). As adults, they grow to a hefty 300 lbs (136 kg). The cubs remain with their protective mother until late summer when salmon season starts.

Cyril loved wandering through unknown territory. Nature was a show of private performances, like those we see on the “Discovery Channel”. Brassy-blue Stellar Jays with rock-star attitudes patrolled the woods while squirrels nibbled on acorns like monks reciting prayers. The crunch of leaves interrupted the silence of the whitetail doe and her fawns prancing around.

In a timeless patience, my brother watched. From behind the bushes scurried two beautiful chocolate-colored cubs, weighing about 50 lbs (22 kg). The cubs chased up the wrinkled bark of a nearby tree. Knowing mama bear would surely follow, he left them in the peacefulness of their acquired forest.

Cyril’s perception allowed him to view bears without fear or hostility. A spiritual kinship existed. The last thing he wanted was to kill one. He felt it unethical and a true violation of the animal, which made British Columbia so special.

The estimated Grizzly population in this province alone is 13,000 and Black bear population from 80,000 to 100,000. Encounters were common when spring was at its peak, the last week of April.

The fluffy white five-petal blossoms of the cherry trees were in full bloom by then. Tackling the problems of the bears at peak season, when the fruit ripened in June, was always a challenge.

The bears rubbed against the cherry tree stretching high, scratching and biting, marking the tree in dominance, searching for food.

“Ohkwari” would return every year, balancing like an acrobat in the treetop on tiny limbs, plucking only at the ripest and sweetest berries. This opportunistic eater would leave for a week or so, and then return to check on his crops. He could eat hundreds, scattering cherry pits below, sometimes wandering onto Cyril’s balcony.

With a natural flair and confidence of an expert, Cyril claimed to be prepared. He minimized my worries over his safety.

The closest I had ever gotten to wild furry beasts I depicted in the “masked bandits” invading my property – raccoons! Nevertheless, I remained worrisome of my brother’s stories of his elusive bears, particularly the one about the grizzly.

This camping trip presented itself as dozens of other trips made before. Glenda accompanied him. Even the weather played its part in a mosaic background of pale-blue puffy white clouds. The spot under the clump of trees, near the arching ferns, was a perfect place to set up their tent.

Chirping crickets disturbed their sleep beneath the mounting moon that hung idly over the old firs; the cries of wolves mothered by the timbered bough.

At dawn, he leaned over stroking the campfire with replenished wood. Orange-glowing embers sang and the kettle whistled.

Placing their camping gear into the truck shortly after breakfast a growl, grunting, huffing roar sent a cold chill down Cyril’s spine. He had heard this sound many times working in the fire towers. Suddenly... everything became crystal-clear... *a bear!*

The animal moved toward him in a slow, shambling walk swaying from side to side... then, as if to get a better look he stood on his hind legs motionless, displaying non-retractable four-inch claws. The “grizzled” appearance of the dark-brown hair on his back and shoulders along with the hump, confirmed it was a “grizzly”. This male

weighed around 500 pounds (226 kg) standing 6.5 feet (198 cm) at shoulder. His jaws were big enough he could have swallowed my brother without even having to chew!

Cyril knew better than to try to outrun the grizzly. They can reach 30 mph (48 kph) -- that is twice as fast as an Olympic sprinter. Instead, in a calm and steady voice, he uttered to Glenda to back away slowly and get into the truck. My bear conscious brother carried a canister of “bear-spray” but prayers were his first defense.

He conversed with the bear.... Spellbound his words forced a truce. In isolation, they kept the bear at a distance forcing a cooperative spirit among them. The grizzly stood before him listening. Then, he opened his jaws wide as if wanting to relay some information, yawning in disinterest. The conversation must have bored him because the animal left Cyril standing in awe to find his way back into the bush.

Park Rangers considered this bear a threat after a couple spotted him close to their campsite.

Despite the presence of wildlife animals, the community lives in harmony alongside these fascinating beasts. A barking dog is a common deterrent of possible danger when coyotes, cougars, and bears linger closely. Almost all residents own several dogs. However, on this camping weekend, there was no dog!

Weeks after the episode, he saw someone carrying a thick cardboard box tagged with bright red letters reading “Free”. Within were four pups. Without a twinge of conscious, Cyril’s protective instincts kicked in and he took one home.

It happens all the time, mistaking wolf hybrids for puppies - all furry, cute, and cuddly. Cyril had inadvertently acquired the largest of the litter unsuspecting what he was getting into. This handsome boy had a luxurious, thick-long haired black coat and haunting amber eyes. “Bear” reminded Cyril of a black-bear cub, which is how he got his name. He was like owning a piece of nature –definitely more wolf than dog, weighing 120 pounds (54 kg) at maturity.

On the opposite side of the continent, Ann also had a dog named “Bear”, unbeknownst to him. Ann’s, purebred German shepherd, was a clone image of Cyril’s dog in a smaller version.

Cyril brought home another pup less than a year later. He found him abandoned at an animal shelter on his way into Williams Lake.

This puppy was unlike other canines!

Fred

“In life the firmest friend / The first to welcome, foremost to defend / Whose honest heart is still his master's own / Who labors, fights, lives, breathes for him alone”
- Lord Byron, from an epitaph on the tombstone of a dog

Kugsha are a rare breed of dogs. From history's standpoint, men utilized this distinguished animal during Arctic expeditions. During the Gold Rush in 1896, they aided the miners and settlers pulling supplies and weighty loads. In Greenland, during World War II, their feat was as search and rescue animals. Nowadays, we see them in winter sports pulling sleighs and mostly as pets.

In Mongolia, beliefs are a dog's spirit reincarnates as a human. Legend has it, they are divine animals blessed by the God “Dzhuu”. Out of respect for their souls, they bury their canines on snow-covered mountains facing Tibet while the monks recite the Dharma to their dogs. Archaeological discoveries point out “Kugsha” lived in this region over 3000 years ago. Those dogs accompanied the Thule civilization, who came over the Bering Strait migrating into the Canadian Arctic. Here, their ancestors lived alongside the Mahlemuts tribe who populated Kotzebue Sound and Northwest Alaska.

Kugsha were vital for hunting, fishing, and a means of travel. Their acute sense of smell permitted them to sense danger, allowing humans to survive predator attacks. In Alaskan territory, the dogs would dig to find air holes in the ice in search of seals or other prey. Their strong legs and massive built gave them endurance. This makes them ideal for pulling heavy loads over a long distance; the reason they became sled dogs.

Fred, a big white 7-year old Kugsha, possesses an unusual calmness, almost Zen-like.

Behind his intelligent almond shaped eyes is a very affectionate, loyal “*Gentle Giant*”. It is a nickname bestowed upon him because of his big, wide paws and his resemblance to a polar bear.

His dense white double-coat consists of a woolly waterproof undercoat and a long, rugged top layer measuring roughly 3 inches (7.62 centimeters). Thick fur is a pragmatic fashion following him throughout the seasons, where winter banishes the warmth of life.

He has small, erect, triangular shaped ears and a long bushy plume-tail, which curls up over his back.

A special birthmark on his tongue sets him apart from others in his category. He displays this black spot whenever he grins.

Fred has a way of interacting with people, mimicking human speech, arguing just like a child. His “Mala-talk” sounds of “coo-ing” and “woo-woo” are comparable to “Chewbacca” in Star Wars. Occasionally, “coo-ing” accompanies his “yips and yelps” and howling, but seldom does he bark.

He is not always compliant, partially because of his genetic disposition. His ancestors survived laborious Arctic conditions, where the only law governing was “survival of the fittest”. Here, age is a symbol of wisdom!

Environmental conditions demanded intelligence.

Determination permitted them to survive through bitter storms and extreme temperatures plummeting to 70 degrees below zero.

They would defy human judgement when it came time to choosing the shortest route.

“Selective hearing” proved to be beneficial, as they were seldom wrong.

I discovered you do not own a Kugsha, they are “*Family*”, and family you cannot abandon. I understood why they acted the way they did. That knowledge was the building block, allowing me to connect in an unbiased way.

Solitude

"Loneliness can be conquered only by those who can bear solitude"
-Paul Tillich

He entered the walls of a dismal building he had passed several times on his way into Williams Lake. On entry, a strong odor of dogs and a sense of sadness and desperation overcame him. Cyril reflected in silence, torn to see the animals, barking and whining, tails wagging, confined to small kennels. All of them surrendered by previous owners because they were too big, old and boring, or simply too much trouble.

He paused before two littermates of opposite sex. "What kind of dog is he", marveled Cyril, pointing to the one with the doggish smile who contemplated a heroic escape.

"A *Kugsha*", replied the employee.

Curiously, he wondered what his story might be. After all, he was in good shape and looked friendly. Why did no one want a rare breed, once sought for his intelligence?

Of no ill will, the attendant warned Cyril: *"He's unpredictable, not house trained....and it seems he has a mind of his own. He'll only be troublesome."*

However, Cyril had already fallen for him and was prepared to compromise. He was not oblivious to a dog needing an owner. Besides, he knew if someone truly cared, he could do some amazing things. In a process as stringent as adopting a child, he filled-in the long questionnaire for this unwanted animal. Cyril believed in time, he could understand his needs and his good qualities would outweigh the bad ones. Besides, this unconventional pet, could keep him company up in the towers so; he brought him home and named him "Fred"; a fitting name suiting his character meaning "sage, wise, handsome old peace".

Their existence was without division from that moment onward.

Being firm with Fred from the start resulted in a lifetime relationship comprised of love, trust, confidence, and mutual respect. That companionship helped my brother juggle the physical and emotional slings and arrows of living. Fred, a driving force and "spirit", gave my brother reason to keep moving forward when he needed it most. I witnessed a profound attachment.

Understanding Fred was to understand Cyril, as an apparent consistency of character existed. Fred recognized his humble, simple need for love and support. He taught Cyril a lot about leading a fulfilling life. Fred's natural energy restored balance, harmony, and comfort. This connection allowed Cyril to overcome boundaries helping him heal from wounds of the past.

Happiest in the dense cool mountains of British Columbia, where the beauty of nature dazzled them, Cyril watched for forest fires while Fred looked out for bears and other wildlife. This existence granted my brother permission to have Fred by his side. He welcomed the solitude, as nature's beauty transformed him. It was food for his soul, making him a whole human being.

Fred and Cyril's dog, "Bear" got along fine with the exception of a few fights. Mistakes happen. At eighteen months, Bear's hormones had reached maturity. By then, Cyril noticed he had longer legs, a narrower chest, and bigger teeth than other dogs. He stood 3 feet (.91 meters) at the shoulders. Unlike Fred, Bear wore his tail up or down yet never curled.

Cyril became painfully aware of his inadequacy in dealing with Bear's conduct that had changed radically when Bear reached two years of age. He tried tapping into the spirits of this exotic animal. However, it was ludicrous believing tender loving care could subvert to his predatory and aggressive behavior, which had taken millions of years to develop.

As a puppy, Bear obeyed what he considered as his pack "alpha" member, Cyril. Now, as a mature animal, he asserted his independence and snarling dominance. He had detected tangible signs of weakness in Cyril. By the second year, he started challenging my brother.

With a wolf, you can never take away things without a fight; possession is the law!

No one, not even Cyril, could predict how Bear would act as a fully-grown hybrid, especially without knowing what percentage of wolf made up his genetics. Weighing over 120 pounds (54 kg), his dog language changed to variances in his demeanor. Bear became a potential danger for everyone.

His mannerisms typically wolf, naturally wanted to be the "alpha" of the pack. His prey drive intensified and so did his digging. Bear was territorial, scent marking, howling endlessly at dawn and dusk, displaying excessive possessiveness. He paced, continually. Bear never overcame the shyness to strangers that led to aggression.

Unknown objects made him panic, leading to a loss of control.

Bear harbored a dislike for Fred. He almost killed him during their last dominance challenge. It was a horrible, heartbreaking crime having consequences. Those were Bear's last glorious moments before Cyril's pulverizing grief, as he witnessed the horrible, gruesome scene of their final confrontation.

In a mesmerized stare, Bear's eyes were wild and threatening. Snarling, his lips curled back and his tail rose. The tension heightened into an altercation. Bear sprang onto Fred in a mighty, sudden leap. The attack had been eerily rapid, exploding like sparks of lightning into the air. With utmost fury, Bear sank his fangs deep into Fred's flesh as he fought back in defense. Cyril picked up a stick hitting Bear until he released Fred, separating the fight shouting, decomposed and angered at what had taken place.

Cyril needed to be truthful about his genetic disposition. Turning Bear loose would have been an extreme act of cowardice. Bear knew no survival skills of the wild. Unable to place him, Cyril did the only thing he could.

It was the hardest act Cyril ever did. He had no alternative and tried doing what was right. He never wanted to destroy Bear however; Cyril doubted he could stop him on his next bout. Looking into his soulful eyes it was not just a possibility. This was an awful nightmare he never wished. A look of uncomprehending sadness, mutely protested Bear did not belong there.

My brother and his wife were in a dire financial situation. They had no money to have Bear put down. A week later with a tight constriction in his heart, Cyril took out his gun flinching at the crack of the loaded rifle. His ears went deaf and his blue eyes, frosted like a cold, icy storm. He shot Bear right between the eyes, making sure he put him out of his misery.

Staring in the distance, within a trance, his small black pupils glazed at nothing. Seconds later Bear's life ended in a bloody mess. The untamed wilderness was too much for Cyril to forget. For a few seconds his consciousness shut down, returning as a broken man. As Bear succumbed, they sat hand in paw, Cyril in total agony.

On that wet, windy day, Cyril cut out a six-foot hole like a template, put leaves in the bottom and covered Bear with his favorite blanket. Then he placed large stones over his grave and prayed. Bear's death was an irredeemable loss, an outrageous and evil crime he committed for having incorrectly judged the events.

He rarely spoke about Bear's death. It haunted him. Yet sometimes it was like the flash of a camera; he would begin reciting the story and would stop half way through, as if it had just happened. He preferred to keep it to himself.

None of us really understood the self-hatred and the depression that followed. His regret was wishing he had missed.

The only reminder he kept was a photograph of Bear in the kitchen next to Mike and Glenda.

Long Road Ahead

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."
- Henry David Thoreau, 1854

Our "Lone Ranger" and Fred set off for the watchtower at Alexis Creek in mid-May. The backcountry cabin sat in the middle of the wilderness, in spine-tingling bear country atop Alex Graham Mountain.

Cyril loved his perch! He received a wage to look at trees in the charms of solitude with a radio providing a link to the outside world.

Furnishings included a bed, desk, chair, propane stove, and fridge. On the floor to the right of the desk, next to the door, he placed Fred's dish.

The previous years he patrolled the Chilanko Lookout, a tower perched on stilts west of Puntzi Mountain, in the Chilcotin. His *"eagle's nest"*, a small steel structure on the ridge, offered a clear view of the awe-inspiring mountains and remote valleys. A long, straight staircase allowed access to the catwalk surrounding a small rustic-wood cabin primitive in nature. The towers came equipped with an outhouse and no piped-in water.

Lightning rods on the roof insulate the cabin. During rip-roaring storms, Cyril stood on an insulated stool for added security.

Large windows occupied three vertical surfaces. On the adjacent wall, he pinned a large topographic map.

Fred, a four-legged piece of radar, served as a first-alarm barking at sounds or sights of danger. His bad karma came rushing out at the mere sight of pack rats that scurried in through openings stealing shiny objects. He sat in the shadows as the sun moved overhead while Cyril watched for the first signs of smoke.

The cool May winds waving soft greetings set nightly temperatures below freezing. Daytime averaged about 17celsius (63 degrees Fahrenheit). Cooperative weather with scarce thunderstorms and heavy morning dew suppressed the chances of forest fires in early season.

The Nimpo Lake and Bella Coola Rivers were still murky from the snowmelt in the mountains. Natives put up their nets across the river mouths catching salmon before the arrival of tourists. Everyone was busy doing something.

The Williams Lake and Anahim Lake Stampedes, as well as the Bella Coola Rodeo, were taking place within weeks. He had planned to come down from the tower for 3 days just for the festivities. A ride into town allowed him to purchase groceries and other necessities. Living in the backwoods meant re-grouping dozens of errands in a single trip... mail, banking, repairs, gas, and the library.

Ten days of silence went up in a puff of smoke! Cyril detected a feathery white wisp through binoculars, within a 12-mile radius as the crow flies. He was pleased to be calling it in... before the fire even had a name... christening it after a nearby landmark as custom.

The fire showed at the one-hundred-thirty-two marking according to his “fire finder” instrument. His tower, shown on the map, had a transparent stick-on compass ring over it. The ring graded in one-degree intervals of 360 degrees. He mapped the readings running lines across marking the spot. Then he completed a smoke-report broadcasting the information to the “Bird Dog” aircraft spotter.

Within minutes, a glistening water-bomber swarmed overhead dispersing red flame-retardants moistening the area, inhibiting the spread of scorching flames until the ground crew arrived.

Uncaged lightening stabbing the darkness caused the Tatla and Chilko fires. Hot, dry weather conditions were just right for the strikes.

Human carelessness was often the source and small campfires spotted at a 5-mile radius were easy to identify. The smoke remained close to the ground. They differed from lighting fires, hitting the treetops vomiting, deep-throated roaring flames. Ninety percent were under a 1/4 acre in size. Only 10% were problems. Cyril was lucky; they rarely got close enough to evacuate his rugged outpost.

With a compass and a topo-map, perceiving flames was not always straightforward. Making mistakes could be an embarrassment causing the responding unit delay. In five minutes, a blaze might grow from 1/8 of an acre to 5 acres, destroying communities and land for wildlife.

Raging fires turned the forest into hell on earth. Dense clouds of acrid smoke, seeping through the air, triggered panic for hundreds of miles around. The unbearable heat of no escape danced in a flurry, like a “Goddess of Light”, searing the woodlands to embers and ashes exposing “Mother Earth’s” oozing sores.

The year 2003 had been catastrophic in British Columbia, resulting in many evacuations. Drought in the Okanagan Valley, sparked by lightning, led to the inferno which burned for almost a month. Quiet ashes fell for days like seeds to the ground.

The fire destroyed twelve of the sixteen Myra Canyon timber trestles along the Kettle Valley rail-trail, in mid-August. Two-hundred homes and 20,000 acres of forest metamorphosed the landscape for a decade to come.

In Tatla Lake, on the Chilcotin plateau, the community had been spared the damages of the fires obscuring the summits the previous year. The smell of wrinkled logs covered with blackened earth and the decaying remains were a simple reminder of how fleeting life can really be. The seasons revolved at an almost dizzy pace, from sprouting new growth to lavish autumn shades, now heralding to the ground. Instinctively, all of nature could feel the onset of winter as wailing Trumpeter swans and geese migrated in flocks.

Fire season had ended.

A serpent of smoke trailed downwind from his chimney.

At dawn, a drop in mercury, evidence to the closing stage of fall, accompanied the crystal frost. A dense, icy-fog engulfed the jagged peaks of the snow-capped mountains. Shadows of the aspen trees, once hews of incandescent yellow had slimmed down to a few barren leaves, barely hanging on to the season’s past. The calendar read November 18th, 2004.

Fall is a time for reflection, a time for lumbering a stockpiled cord used for fueling throughout the winter. Today was the day. One by one, Cyril split the wood repeatedly, stacking them laboriously in cords.

The preceding days were milestone birthday celebrations; his own, followed by Jason's. My mind still focused on our conversation swaying from birthday wishes to whatever entertaining story he happened to tell.

Grasping the ax, Cyril lacked fluidity in his movements. He lost his balance before consciousness shifted away from reality, as faint and distant as a setting sun. Someone had put the world on mute. His collapsed body now siphoned by a slow waning of life.

Fred poised in a "Buddahood" attitude, like a green-glazed Shandong dog, his ears perked back, straining to hear Cyril's command. Silence murmured in the breast of the wind. On an impulse, he ran for help. We can only speculate, as no one knows with certainty how long it took, or what Fred was thinking.

Cyril suffered from cerebral ischemia. Transported by helicopter to an intensive-care unit, in a comatose state, he suffered from septic shock, an infection associated with diabetes.

The prognosis was negative and his recovery unsure. He remained submerged in a subconscious world in which we did not exist. In the following weeks, I prayed the Lord would take him so he would not suffer or worse, experience the effects of surviving a neurological disaster. The silence muffled by continuous wheezing of the ventilator, systematically breathing in and out, in symphony with peaks of alarms from nearby machines.

While in the coma, he groaned like an enraged animal shaking the bars of his prison, tearing out the tubes and I-V making it necessary to restrain him.

A metaphorical connection braided between the subject of bears and Cyril, one thought unsheathing another. They were much the same, solitary, strong-willed, and aloof, possessing a sweet honey of life connection to the forest. Was he hibernating in the den of his soul for answers during this coma? Was he feeding on a lesson in the depth of his sleep? Was he connecting to those he knew in the hereafter or, was he drawing upon his energy deep within to survive? Was the coma, his final step before reaching out to the other side? During hibernation, a bear's kidney ceases functioning. Cyril's vital organs were slowly shutting down.

His period of reclusiveness similar to the bears had been in winter, his idle time from the towers. During the coma, he had a language of his own, growling like a bear. My imagination stirred by the Native lore and myth of this elusive creature. Could a bear endowed with supernatural qualities, transform into a human? Was there any form of logic to this irrational thinking or had it been just simple speculation, hoping he would somehow pull through? Could the bear really be a communicator between the earth and sky? Could he be a messenger to the supernatural world? This important clan animal, even occupies a lunar spot in the heavens, the "Big Dipper", symbolizing the unconscious mind. The belief is that a bear's soul is able to move freely between the "natural world" and the "other world".

Have you ever noticed the humanlike appearance their carcass has when skinned? It lends itself to anthropomorphism when walking erect on two legs swinging its arms. The underlying psychology our lives might connect was not as removed from what we assume.

Weeks went by. Consciousness faded in and out. Slowly the patchwork of missing pieces began coming back accompanied by intense grief. Death tried to nudge him. Despite the grim odds, he pulled through, but it left its mark; his ever present body with an often-absent mind. A master of his fate, Cyril bit into the life given him with more determination than ever claiming Fred saved him!

Following the coma, he referred to his life as “before” and “after”. His existence would never be the same. Released from the hospital in January 2005, depressed, confused and not the same man, Fred sat patiently waiting. Months passed. At first, he used a cane to lean on. Fred contented himself with a short walk, overshadowing his every move.

My brother is the strongest, most determined man I have ever known. He proved the doctors wrong. As the calendar shed its pages, he returned to the fire towers.

With the flair of a clown, he wore a façade projecting an endless smile. It was purely a matter of self-preservation. Inwardly he muffled his tears alone. I sensed his isolation. I received letters, the first one dated April 17th, 2005 in which he stated: “...*Just staying alive... I feel very alone... I don't want to hurt anymore*”. It became clear to me his marriage was in serious difficulty in the second letter dated September 11th, 2005.

His mood swings were difficult coping with. Cyril had diabetes. Much to his dislike, his spouse oversaw his condition. He became moody, lost weight, his vision blurred, and his feet tingled with neuropathy. At first, he reacted to the diagnosis in disbelief and annoyance. Robbed of health and income diabetes became a source of strife affecting the lives of everyone around him. His dialogue became that of a boxing match when his sugar fluctuated, spiking, and dropping. His stiff regime forced him to check his sugar count. Daily, he used the insulin pen injecting it into his torso.

Cyril heard of the favorable effects of meditation on diabetic patients. He turned to meditation in periods of stress and crisis, when his meds alone were insufficient for the chronic pain of neuropathy erupting in his hands and feet.

A member of the local tribe taught him native knowledge. The man who guided him appeared genetically related to “Genghis Khan”, the founder of the Mongol Empire. His jet-black hair was as straight as a witch’s broom. He had thick copper skin, a firm-heavy jaw, and thin lips. Fine-flat eyebrows arched like a bow above his dark eyes. This elder willingly shared the values of his culture. Cyril dared to call him a “mystic” or a “Shaman”.

No talk of bows and arrows, tomahawks, peace pipes or powwows took place. They spoke of the “cycle of life”, the “Labyrinth” and ancient times. His People had crossed the land bridge from Mongolia over to Alaska during the Ice Age, accompanying dogs like “Fred”. Cyril listened to the wisdom of this Visionary.

Their haphazard encounter originated in Williams Lake on May 5th, 2006. The “Williams Lake Tribune” printed an ad about an event happening two days later in Boitanio Park on the Gwen Ringwood Stage.

Cyril wanted to know more about the sacred journey of the “Labyrinth”, this ancient archetype web of meditative wisdom used to stimulate reflection and healing. As the path of the labyrinth curves within, it conjures images offering insight. It intrigued Cyril and he needed all the healing help he could get.

The Palliative Care Society of Central Caribou Hospice for terminally ill patients hosted the event. My brother had been among the “Labyrinth-walkers”: Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, members of the First Nations and “freethinkers” seeking answers.

On June 30th he returned to Williams Lake, entered the “Boitanio Mall” on Oliver Street. He made some purchases. He bought a hat at “Mark’s Workwear”. Then he headed to the local bookstore where he picked up a soft-covered volume: a vision of ancient Native Indian wisdom on healing the body, mind, and spirit.

As a silent testimony of values, he wore Native history in the form of a black-bead cord around his neck. An amulet decorated with a genuine bear claw surrounded by two black onyx nuggets and three red-glazed beads on either side. He claimed it was for protection and good health.

Cyril went back with Fred to work at the Alex Graham tower in the Chilcotin.

Fred reserved home for family affairs, but out in the forest exploitation of the good things in life meant: going out hunting, scouting in nature and building a den. He would always come back wagging his tail, as the sweet victory of the hunt remained the intrinsic reward. Upon his return, Fred would hunker down next to Cyril, but that day was different.

The cry of the eagles taking flight across the sky painted with ribbons of clouds broke the silence.

Cyril remained on alert, watching an approaching car in keen awareness as Fred bounced around trying to warn him. Visitors, rarely encountered in these depths of the woods, now and then meant trouble.

According to Cyril, that visit represented something very special. In an unexpected moment, his son Jason had travelled thousands of miles just to see him. My brothers' eyes glistened with tears of joy. Cyril always spoke about it. His thoughts tainted with sorrow for rarely being a bigger part of his son's existence. They were in fleeting touch throughout the years.

My brother betrayed himself only to realize he had gone too far from those he loved. Now, those precious relationships were the reason of his long awaited visit in February 2007. A time I shall never forget.

Our chocked throats left prose unsaid, but the heaviness of nostalgic childhood memories resurfaced, causing a glazing whelp of tears. Sharing a deferred Christmas celebration at my house meant the family gathering under one roof.

His preceding stopover in '98 took place next to Dad's bedside at the "Veterans' Hospital", in Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue. Dad died of cancer a week after Cyril's departure. Karen never had the chance to meet Cyril until our Christmas-in-February, 20 years later.

Dad and Cyril had been drinking buddies. After Cyril went sober, they drifted apart. It triggered the pain of previous losses even though he kept it buried deep beneath the surface.

On January 10th, 2008 reality crashed as steady as a raft on jagged rocks. The doctor declared Cyril's severe neuropathy and diabetes, a significant barrier to suitable employment. This ended his life as a fire spotter.

Without a job, his marital relationship deteriorated into a power struggle.

He felt under attack, angry and hurt. Cyril knew he could not change things. Instead of playing the victim and beating himself up for what he did wrong, he placed Fred into the van and left.

Although he always faced monetary struggles, this time was harder. His financial strait was not an excuse. They were his imperfections. He lied to avoid being exposed.

I tried letting those things go unnoticed, so our hearts would continue to touch, refusing to allow these matters thwart our understanding and our relationship. His life was his own; damning him proved uselessly unfair. What he needed was someone to listen. I failed in eye-rolling moments trying to persuade him to give up Fred.

He would straighten up and retreat; all between us would go silent. I knew then I had missed the mark. A dog is a friend for life. When you lose a part of life, it is hard letting go of the rest... *even a dog!*

His failing health, financial issues, and loss of employment were a blow to the gut. Rekindling with family in finding support led to another cross Canada journey to Montreal.

Concerned over his safety, Mike (Cyril's friend) joined Cyril and Fred, planning to take advantage of the trip to visit with his sister (Sheila), his daughter (Rachael) and his grandchildren.

Sheila knew all about the man with the big white dog, who wore his heart on his sleeve, long before meeting him. Years before, during Christmas 2003, Mike had been in trouble. Cyril drove over 1,334 km (828 miles) from Tatla Lake to Lethbridge, Alberta, with a carload of gifts for his kids. Their friendship had no boundaries, a kind of "push and pull" binding them together.

Sheila and Cyril became true friends despite the challenges with Fred (the consequences, both good and bad). Fred set a completely new meaning into the art of excavation putting his unskilled landscaping to the test. Fred, a working breed capable of replacing ten men, stepped into a diggers' haven full of treasures to uproot. Sheila always forgave him when it came time for his witch-hunts.

"If someone wanted to bury bodies in their back yard, they should hire Fred: he's like a backhoe!" Sheila went on to explain it took fifteen minutes exhuming beloved "Smokey Joe", her customer's cat, buried under the pine tree the previous year.

Once he uprooted the six-foot pine hulling "Smokey Joe" out, he lost interest. With a gloomy sigh, Cyril nodded agreeably. He then leveraged the tempered steel blade of the shovel, scooping the earth into place, returning "Smokey Joe" to his burial ground.

Fred smiled; rather pleased, yet tired from all the digging, now lay down his head. This was not a "hangdog" moment for him. It was a much-needed time, just as meaningful as digging for gold; a time to express his natural instincts burrowed within his genes and those of his ancestors.

I had little interest in dogs until I met Fred. We hit it off (other than dirt and dog smell). However, dogs were off limits in our house. He was the gentlest, most mild mannered animal I ever met, possessing more finesse than a diplomat does!

My first encounter with this huge furry beast happened in Cyril's vehicle. Feeling sorry for my clothes, Cyril threw me a towel before thick, gooey saliva made its way onto my shoulder. This is when I first noticed a black spot on his tongue, a birthmark.

There were things he enjoyed doing, unlike fetching objects, which he never engaged in. Given a chance, Fred preferred hanging his head out the window eating the breeze. Today, he positioned himself in the rear seat, between passenger and driver, getting a good look at the road reacting more like a child than a dog. Fred comprehended vocabulary and understood logic. I was convinced he could speak. Staring intently at Cyril, he hung onto every syllable, his body language, transforming into a loud baritone "woof".

My brothers reconnected. In younger years, the typical sibling rivalry existed, something between a thorn and a hero. Despite the friction, there was a deep bond of loyalty. They cherished their connection for a better part of their life taking different directions coexisting, but not always happily. It was never catastrophic. It led to a solace of another kind. Eventually, Cyril had to come to terms with his enigmatic brother who erected barriers.

Coming back brought Cyril to a strange place ill defined. Yanic had a lifetime of stories and confidences to cram into visits after a decade of separation. They spoke of Philip's mysterious fatality, a mess of hideous lies and confusion. No one talked about Phil's casualty until now. We survived in silence rarely mentioning his name. Sadly, Dad's well-intentioned efforts contributed to our isolation.

Several years later, during Dad's funeral, we also buried Philip. The stigma of our "phantom loss" kept him isolated on a shelf deprived of a closing ritual. Facing the reality of the circumstances was part of the problem. Beyond the mystery of his death, Philip gave us little to hold on to apart from a vast horrifying uncertainty and lingering unanswered questions.

We suspected Philip owed money for drugs and there was foul play. Philip had long lost control of his brutally rough life. He struggled to survive like a vulture picking at nothing but bare bones. Had Cyril mistaken the details, too shaken to look at the real picture? Did he die of his own consent? Was death an illusory thought in a battle to find peace and happiness out from a hopelessly cruel world? Had he succumbed to a more powerful external force? This is what we believed. Or, did he resign to fate and yield to death voluntarily? The eternal sleep would have taken away his troubles.

Suicide conflicts with stigma and negative moral judgement creating complex emotions. Years have gone by and the answers remain perpetually ambiguous.

A special category of "disenfranchised" grieving accompanies those who remain after death by suicide or overdose of drugs or alcohol. Stigmatized by society, it deprives you of something very personal making you believe this death is a "*less important death*", unworthy of mourning. In addition to bereavement, there is stigma, shame, fear, pangs of guilt, blame, and secrecy leading to isolation. "Disenfranchised" grief is excruciating. The emotional damage lasts a lifetime. We were fated from the beginning of childhood understanding this lingering wound.

I found Cyril a family doctor and financial assistance. He stayed with me and my spouse (Claude) and son (Eric) for three months while Ann (sister) took Fred back to her mini-farm in the Beauce. I had refused to allow Fred indoors, unable to handle a dog his size. Cyril constantly worried about him, especially after Fred's attempted escape, chewing through Ann's barn door. It was enough to tell him Fred needed to be with him.

We initiated Cyril to some of our special family events. Rodeos are not my cup of tea, but Ann's rough stock rodeo was a popular family sporting event, displaying our cowboy and cowgirl skills, of which we had none. We never drew crowds, just family members. Normally, rodeos involve horses and livestock, but with Ann, it was turkey, Cyril's favorite food.

Fowl grew into an atrocious size on Ann's farm. Beluga-sized, super-charged, organic-feed turkeys were her specialty!

Turkeys have a 270-degree vision span, making it difficult to sneak up on them. They can be ferocious as the scrunch, spit and bite. Sounds unusual, but catching a turkey embodies more than what meets the eye. We quickly grasp to seize and swallow one takes effort. The go-round prize for contestants was never money or a rodeo belt, just a good time of laughter and a free, grain-fed turkey in return. The timed event of "tie-down turkey" and "turkey racing" (compared to bull racing) had Cyril run in all directions. It was a challenging catch. The biggest defeat remained... fitting a feathered 30-pound beast in the back of a car.

The paradoxical moment reminded me of the time Ann drove four hours away, to pick up some sheep, driving home with two of them in her old Volvo! Along route 20, passing vehicles starred at the ghastly sight of her unusual passengers as she smiled in return. The curious sight now became Fred! Ann welcomed him. Wherever Fred was welcomed, Cyril went.

Throughout the year, he visited relatives, rekindled with old acquaintances, attended AA meetings, and made new friends. Those AA meetings etched footprints into his soul, giving him purpose. Cyril shifted his way of thinking, striving to find peace to become a better person. He volunteered on the Alcoholic Anonymous hotline. With little to offer but his heart, he filled it with appreciation and human kindness.

His financial difficulties had always been the ball and shackle of his tragic life. The basics seemed impossible to attain. Affordable lodging with a large dog remained without a solution. His abiding dedication to Fred refused to let go regardless of the circumstances.

The "fast life" stress of urban areas was not part of the peaceful, slow-paced living Cyril and Fred had known. A preference for fewer lanes, slower speeds, an affordable home rich in nature with ample room for Fred to roam brought Cyril closer to Ann (sister). Her heart dwelled in moderate surroundings filled with lavish generosity of the heart.

Cyril and Yanic (sister) followed the course of the Chaudière River that flows in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains, en route to the Beauce region south of Quebec City. The presence of grain and dairy farms spread out in a patchwork over the horizon. Landscapes of gentle rolling hills, dotted with seas of corn and wheat offered an exotic beauty of its own. The scent of wildflowers permeated the air.

He acquainted with Ann's daughters: Tina, Vanessa, Kimberly, and Charlie (Kim's finance).

Cyril could not afford extravagance. In late summer, he rented a cottage in Saint-Côme-Linière, a forty-five minute drive from Ann's, within a small community of 3300 residents, on the south shore of the St-Lawrence River. Fred and Cyril found a brief interval of tranquility here.

Neighboring nine-year old Naomi became Fred's "best friend"! A beam of happiness shone from her smile at the sheer sight of Fred. When the yellow bus halted, our four-legged "gentleman" put on his most alluring smile greeting her with open paws and a wagging tail. Once her schoolbag slipped out of sight, in sporting delight, she would tow him off on exuberant expeditions.

It was easy to love Fred. His behavior was infectious and sweeter than toffee!

Infused with the Holiday spirit, she carved a carrot-nosed snowman wearing a smiley face. It stood facing Fred's den as steady as a one-eyed Buddhist Dharma figure teaching Zen to a dog. Unfortunately, this was the last Christmas they spent together.

Seemingly, our family drama always occurred during Christmas. In our childhood, the magic was lost to addiction where stress lived in the shadows and the weight of the struggles. Anxiety levels rose and moods dropped in the chaos of the season. I have associated the Holidays with loss, unfulfilled dreams, and running away. Traditionally, they were painful and filled with a void. In adulthood, trying to forget our misery I pushed Christmas away yearning for peace knowing perfectly well, what we had missed.

Cyril's AA sponsor, Bill, moved his father into a retirement home. The family house, in Pointe Claire (west of Montreal) was for sale. Bill offered Cyril the opportunity of living there, rent-free, until the house sold. Cyril accepted his offer. Eight weeks later, someone purchased the house.

Disheartened, he headed back to British Columbia in February 2009, leaving a deep sadness between us.

He settled on the eastern coast of Vancouver Island in Nanoose Bay, March 16th. A wildlife area with a dazzling ocean view named after the First nations, just a two-hour ferry ride north of Nanaimo, off Highway 19.

His new home was a trailer Mike bought for him relocated on a wooded lot they refer to as "Marmor".

Along the shore, large flocks of gulls feed on krill. As it floats, seals and majestic Stellar-sea lions play together, growling their presence on the ocean's surface.

Above the coniferous forest, an abundance of bald eagles shared the sky with shorebirds, songbirds, and black Brant geese.

Fingers of sunlight slanted through the trees. The forest reacted like a giant sponge, seeping water from a nearby creek. The peacefulness of the woodland beckoned him in reflection as wailing loons predicting the rain, lulled him to sleep.

Mike's proudest accomplishment (a trailer) offered Cyril a permanent solution, without conditions attached. A real need now fulfilled. I offered a temporary gap with conditions, refusing to allow him to keep Fred. They shared secrets of "brotherhood", knowing what it is to engage in solidarity.

White-headed woodpeckers drummed on the hollow snags as Mike and Cyril cleared the land and built a shed. Throughout the acreage, they set about mismatched garden chairs, scavenged from flea markets, like pawns and bishops on a chessboard.

On regular visits, Mike arrived with their favorite meal, a hamburger layered with lettuce, pickles and tomatoes; and an order of greasy fries for Fred. They picnicked under the trees until the sound of dusk in chorus, reminiscing stories of their 30-year friendship under the shade.

Cyril appeared content with his new living arrangements. I knew I had failed him. Instinctively, even at a distance, I sensed his loneliness. Occasionally, he would send us jokes wanting to say something, not always knowing how. It was his way of telling us we were important, that he loved us and still cared.

Final Goodbye - 2009

"Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."
- Alcoholics Anonymous

On a fatal course, Cyril headed into turbulent waters (October 19th, 2009) confronting another challenge: gangrene.

The severe "neuropathy", a direct long-term complication of his diabetes affected the nerve endings in his feet, causing a tingling pain and loss of sensation. My brother had been using a drug, "gabapentin", as a treatment.

At first, the small lesion forming under his right foot had gone unnoticed, until it degenerated into a painful black spot. He tried disinfecting it, but the damage was irreversible.

Sheila phoned me after the hospital admitted him. Her words snapped like a minefield. Cyril now faced his worst nightmare: losing a limb. How would he manage, in the woods, in a country that is like a dragon fast asleep? With loss of mobility, how would he care for Fred?

The dog had been his biggest reason for not seeking medical assistance sooner. Cyril refused to leave Fred alone. The situation was now beyond critical.

Lodging Fred had been fundamental in Cyril's decision. Mike offered Fred temporary housing, despite the stress it added to his home life. This gesture allowed Cyril peace of mind, permitting him the time needed for surgery.

We recognized the reasons behind Mike and his wife's hesitation, grasping the fact our culprit thrived on redesigning a yard into a lunar surface. They sacrificed their freedom so his skills would not spill over into frustration and anger proving quite a challenge.

The rain poured with conviction that sickly gray autumn. The mud hitting after the rain had me praying one-day colorless mud would exist. Trying to bypass Fred's memory so he would accept surrendering to his image of a white dog remained futile. Fred was anything but rational on the subject doing his funny imitation of a duck in a squelchy black pond. The therapeutic benefits to mud baths relieved him from anxiety, stress, and an insatiable hunger to dig for pleasure, prey or, just a cool place to lie. Boredom, combined with the wet season and perpetual digging, had transformed him!

Mike and Nancy owned a Shiatsu, "Skippy", but were ill equipped and unaccustomed to bathe a large dog. With the help of Nancy's friend, Allana, who allowed Fred into her new Land Rover, they brought him to Dogs n' Suds.

This local business in Nanaimo offered a "u-wash" service where owners washed their pets while Dogs n' Suds supplied the tools and equipment.

At first, Nancy and Allana worried how Fred would react to the handling, but he remained submissive throughout. Fred tucked his big head under Nancy's arm, while she praised and petted him for forty-five minutes, while Allana did the multiple washing and rinsing.

Originally, Dogs n' Suds refused Fred because of a skin condition. Cyril referred to them as "hot spots". After Nancy explained about Cyril's hospitalization, his refusal to leave Fred and the challenging circumstances in which he lived, Dogs n' Suds finally accepted.

Cyril reminded them of the homeless man in Nanaimo, who brought his big dog in for a bath every three months. He reimbursed by collecting pop bottles. Just like Fred, his man's dog meant the world to him.

At Mike's Fred became increasingly introverted, restricting his movements, keeping a guarded watch by the window waiting for Cyril to return.

The operation removed part of his right foot. Morphine alleviated the pain along with intravenous antibiotics to save what remained. The surgery necessitated bandages and a special suction pump, identified as a "CAD Machine", hooked into a gadget the size of a computer disk. This battery-powered machine, displaying an emergency telephone number and an alarm rang if the machine happened to malfunction. It stayed on for weeks, reducing his mobility.

I prayed the trouble getting the mobile pump to work would delay his discharge yet, the Doctor determined to release Cyril on Friday, October 23rd, even though he still had the infection.

Mike and Nancy expressed their feelings, stating his living conditions were unsuitable for someone convalescing. They insisted the hospital social services, and the Homeless coordinator in Parksville become actively involved.

The only arrangement acceptable to Cyril, was going back to the trailer. Living in a homeless shelter without Fred was impossible. Thus, Mike took it upon himself, built a ramp to facilitate Cyril's access, and checked in on him.

Rather than allowing the nurses to go and change the dressings three times a week, he drove out seeking medical assistance, struggling with appointments.

I questioned the validity of his explanations. Was this an effort to avoid the glare of judgment from others regarding his living conditions or had the nurses refused to go? Hopelessly weak, fatigued and crawling in depression, his health rapidly deteriorated.

Gift

14/11/2009

To Lynda Roy

From: Cyril Roy (cyrilroy@hotmail.com)

Sent: November 14, 2009 1:34:10 AM

Hi there!

I just wanted to say thanks a million for the birthday gift. Mike had given it to me earlier today. Thanks a million. I bought a sweatshirt, and sweatpants, and some Boost. Doctors and nurses tell me that the meal supplement from Boost is very good for me at this time.

I bought Fred some canned dog food too. So I don't have to worry about anything for a while, and can focus on just getting better. I haven't found a way to trim my nails yet, and that's driving me crazy. I have nails like a girl!

I have to go to the hospital tomorrow morning to pick up more bags of penicillin.

I have to go to see the nurses again on Sunday. I better call them tomorrow to ask if I'm supposed to go there tomorrow, because I've forgotten already. I wonder if my memory is a sign of something else??? Fred is sticking to me like glue. I think he's been very worried about me too. Rest assured, I will get through this all, and you should know that getting through this will be in large part due to you. I am so grateful for you, and for all you've done. I love you very much. Always, always remember that!

Talk to you in the morning. Maybe you would be sure to get me if you call at 11 AM your time. Or, even 10 AM your time.

Take care. Sweet dreams.

Apparently, animals can sense an earthquake, smell disease, and even death long before they occur. Yes, I am certain Fred knew. Cyril affirmed Fred acted strangely the last few days. Intentionally, they ventured beyond what we were afraid to risk.

My concerns for Cyril grew increasingly.

Longing for stillness to connect with my emotional self and realign, I contacted St-Mary's, a local church in Nanoose, British Columbia. I understood only divine intervention would bring me some spiritual comfort giving me force to overcome the turmoil. I found them on the Internet. Their many festive celebrations included a yearly ceremony for blessing community pets.

Heaven help my brother!

From: Lynda Roy

Sent: November 24, 2009 9:1700 AM

To: Rev. Macluskie

Dear Rev. Macluskie,

You may be wondering who I am and why I am writing to you and I hope you will take the time to read on as you are my last hope.

I will begin by telling you that my name is Lynda Roy and I live in Boucherville, Quebec (xxx) xxx-xxx. My brother, Cyril Roy (58 years old) lives in a trailer with no hot water and no toilet next to xxxxx Rd, Nanoose Bay, BC. He is a very sick man who is a diabetic and needs insulin on a daily basis. Recently, he was operated for gangrene and is in severe depression. He has gone from 180 lbs to barely 120 lbs and continues to lose weight. Due to the operation and his immune system, the Doctor has installed an intravenous tube in his chest so he could receive penicillin. He does see the nurse 3 times weekly who is well aware of the depression and health issues. His small under the counter fridge contains more penicillin bags than food! He lives with his dog, Fred. A few years ago, my brother was in a coma. Fred saved his life so he remains faithful to Fred forever. I believe in angels, Rev. Macluski, and I believe Fred is an angel! Fred is his reason for living! I wish it would be so easy to, just get rid of Fred and find another place for him to stay but I know that would kill him.

He says he is ashamed of the living conditions, yet has no choice since; it is the only place where he can live with Fred. He does not have the financial means to afford anything else since he is a welfare recipient, and lives from cheque to cheque and barely makes it.

The trailer is, as he says, "a mess" with loads of dirty dishes. He is incapable of cleaning it. He says he has lost all his dignity!

I have arranged for him to receive meals-on wheels 3 times weekly. I try to help support him as best as I can.

Is there someone who can help him? Is there a place where he could go to bathe on a weekly basis? Is there a place where he could wash his clothes? Is there someone who could help him clean the place? The cold months are approaching quickly and I am extremely concerned. He does not know that I have written to you for help but his phone number is (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Please feel free to call me if needed. I will accept the collect call.

Can you please help him?

From: Rev. Macluskie

Date: Tue, 24 Nov 2009 07:35:39 -0800

To: Lynda Roy

Subject: Re: Heaven help my brother!

Hi, Lynda... my heart goes out to you and to your dear brother here in Nanoose. Yes, I and a few others from St. Mary's will do what we can, today if possible... Sounds like he is in great need. I will write again later in the day. In the meantime, you and he are in my prayers.

Ron

From: Lynda Roy

Sent: November 25, 2009 11:43:31AM

To: Rev. Macluskie

Dear Rev. Macluskie,

I am grateful to you for any assistance that he can get. He is very precious to me. He taught me the most important lesson in life: "unconditional love".

He has no clean clothes left to wear and cannot afford the laundry mat nor does he have the health with the penicillin sani-pak attached to him for yet sometime to go. The penicillin has severe side effects that he cannot control let alone the other health issues he faces.

I am in touch with him several times a day via either internet or phone. I feel like MSN has become my umbilical cord, a source of life.

He is a good man and would give all he has and more... You will see for yourself that he has a heart of gold!

In November, Cyril used his most punitive power, silence, to which I had little tolerance and no control. Seeking to find some rational explanation, I contacted the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). They assured me he was fine.

Nonetheless, my subconscious experienced dreams as if they were warnings of upcoming events. They spanned over a period, like pointers addressing the issues plaguing my existence. The ghost of slumber threatened me like a phantom of my intuition. My imagination disallowed me to ignore them as if his spirit was present.

The computer volume set to maximum at all times so Cyril could flag me. Pillow-less nights kept us in constant touch. I lacked sleep and misty dreams invaded reality, like a written report of my emotions finding a way into awareness. They were unique needing no analyzing unifying spirit, body, and mind. One dream had been vividly sharper than real life.... *Awakened by the shrieking pitch of the doorbell, I crawl to the window. Below, a police car and two officers have come bearing bad news.*

My heart pounded vigorously standing in the dark, unintentionally waking Claude (my spouse) as I pulled on a housecoat.

Squint-eyed he asked, *"Where are you going...what's wrong"?*

"The doorbell woke me", yet I cannot see anyone from the window.

"It was a dream, nothing more than a dream... come back to bed", he replies.

I am now aware of a dreadful nightmare that feels like a wave frothing at the shore. The window had bridged my present to the future like a bird's eye-view of "what is" and "what will be" revealing the ending.

I prayed my MSN would prove me wrong in the morning.

My brother refused to answer the door for Mike, or the phone for Sheila, or aunt Georgette and any others.

Fred's vocalization characterized signs of anxiety from within the trailer, but his bark remained misunderstood.

Cyril quietly prepared for separation during the days he went incommunicado in the middle of a six-acre forest. He knew in his heart the end drew near.

From: Lynda Roy

Sent: November 27, 2009 9:07:25PM

To: Cyril Roy

Hi,

What is happening... you're not answering your email or your phone? Hey, I am worried. I have emailed you and phoned 3 times and you're not answering. Help me!!!

Please... give me a sign!

From: Lynda Roy

Sent: November 27, 2009 9:09:59PM

To: Cyril Roy

I am worried... please respond... I beg you to send me an email

Love ya

xxxx

Please Fred. Tell Cyril to send me an email or call me

From: Lynda Roy

Sent: November 27, 2009 10:18:00 PM

To: Cyril Roy

Hi! Why don't you make me a sign? I am worried!

Please tell me you are there!

Love ya

xxxx

Hey... answer me please!

From: Lynda Roy

Sent: November 28, 2009 5:07:07PM

To: Cyril Roy

Last week I sent this email to St-Mary's church hoping that they might be able to help you. I found the church on internet and so here is what I wrote...

I was hoping they could provide you with help for doing your laundry and a place where you could go to take a shower or a bath on a regular basis. Maybe even get someone who could come in and help with the dishes.

Where did I go wrong? Would you not have done this for me?

From: Lynda Roy

Sent: November 28, 2009 10:43:31PM

To: Sheila McDonald

Hi Sheila,

No news! I have sent several e-mails and also called several times. Nothing!

Why is he mad at me? I thought that maybe it had to do with the letter I sent the Rev. of Ste-Mary's church so I forwarded the email to him with all the replies that went on back and forth between us. I was hoping he would see for himself that I wanted to get him some help.

All I did was try to help him as best as I knew how. I thought that maybe the church could help him to find a place to wash and do his laundry and maybe get someone who could help him clean his place since he didn't have the energy to be able to do so.

I will let you know if he does contact me but, I am beginning to think that may not happen.

Good night!

From: Lynda Roy

Sent: November 28, 2009 10:52:39PM

To: Cyril Roy

Hi,

Just wanted to wish you good night!

I had a similar call years ago from Dad regarding Philip. The bell of “death” announcing, “He’s gone”. The same kind of dreaded phone call came from Sheila on Monday, November 30th. It was not the object of her call. She speculated the RCMP had already been in touch. The circumstances added to a situation of real grief and despair more torture.

There was no human intervention, CPR, nor heart massage or defibrillator ... just Fred. Although he tried informing others, only a few understood his barking to be unusual behavior; his way of sending a warning, as he did for Cyril when bears were present.

Fred’s intuition was remarkably accurate.

The crudeness of death had redeemed its victory arousing an emotional strangulation of pain and regret. His casualty made events of our lifetime spread before me. Even the mundane events had such profound meaning. Pulled into a million little pieces I wept his absence feeling the depth of our bond more than ever.

In a hidden truth, Reverend Macluskie concluded, “There is a gift for every moment of our lives. Sometimes, it's amid pain, sorrow, and even death of those we love.”

“Cyril won!” Bill remarked. Throughout the emotional and physical pain, during the worse time giving up would have been so easy yet, Cyril never slipped back to drinking.

He is my hero.

His road presented him many detours. Now on a solo expedition to a place beyond, leaving us in solitude I tagged our memories, believing his passage to be a continuation of the new existence Cyril now embraced.

We grieved... and Fred grieved with us.

The RCMP advised Mike they would send a patrol car advising the nearest of kin. They affirmed this was normal procedure, but someone had eavesdropped on my dream.

They confirmed delivering a “CPIC” message to their counterparts, “La Sûreté du Québec”. I felt strangely alienated seven days later, still waiting for them. They never came. On December 7th, I headed toward their office seeking an explanation.

While waiting in police headquarters, a visitor spoke of the bitter cold climate, reflecting on the homeless who had no place to go. His words were as cruel as death, like a heavy chain beneath the links of pain.

“We wonder why they own dogs... they own dogs to keep them warm”, he announced.

This man knew nothing about Cyril and Fred, nor the reason I was there. He regretted the discussion. In wells of tears, escorted by an officer, I left him, muted to go about his activities.

The officer ushered me down the hall on the first floor, to a door on the right. He flicked on the lights of a large windowless boarding room the size, accommodating 25 to 30 people. Holding my folder, I took place at the head of a large, rectangular wooden oak table, neatly surrounded by numerous stuffed conference chairs, the Captain to my left.

Demystifying events, he left the room repeatedly, for over an hour, searching for a justification. Clearly, something had gone wrong.

“The CPIC message slipped into the cracks of the system”.

This verbal apology lacked clarification. I believed Cyril deserved a moral obligation of respect. In exchange, a letter arrived December 17th, signed by the captain, explaining the problem in procedures had been the cause. His words left me feeling disconnected. They lost the “CPIC” message, setting the computer off after hours. He ensured me they would redirect “future transmissions” to the next unit in line of duty, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The revised course of action would help to prevent this happening again.

Reverend Macluskie, this stranger to whom I wrote, became my gateway to heaven rendering my toll easier to bear. On December 10th, in St-Mary’s church, a picture of Cyril with Fred appeared before the altar as the essence of winter’s sleep shimmered through the stained glass.

Within the tribute, Reverend Macluskie read a touching letter from Cyril's doctor mentioning the courage of this man, who demonstrated innate goodness.

Over 60 people attended the commemorative ceremony, his best friend Mike beside him to the end! John Camp (Cyril's neighbor) was there with his wife (Velvet) and their kids, along with Deidre, Cyril's outreach worker.

Deidre shared genuine concern over Fred's future going to the local shelter to check on Fred.

During the eulogy, Reverend Macluskie mentioned how Cyril cared for his "constant companion". When potential property owners warned, "it's either this place or your dog" he always chose Fred. He then made a statement: "Sometimes, living on subsistence level means making a choice between: food, housing, and even love! Cyril was a blessing, a gift for each of us. He had a spirit of poverty that is winsome".

Cyril's radiant smile gazed peacefully at the guests who attended. It inspired me to look beyond the surface, finding a way out of my own darkness into the light. Through his strengths, flaws, challenges and joys, he worked his way to eternal destiny.

I had pride in his achievements, the most important one being the essence of his love... a love for nature, family, friends... and his dog, Fred!

Wrapping my soul onto a voiceless heaven his presence clung like vapor, slowly fading like shapes breathed on frosty winter windows.

Afterwards, Nancy and Mike organized a small reunion in their home.

Our last soothing redemption was Bill, who accepted to set Cyril's ashes free in the caressing winds the following summer, over the aqua water of Seton Lake, so he could find his heaven: *the perfect place*, near the sacred Acacia trees!

Rescue Part I

“Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen.”
- Orhan Pamuk

Moving forward remained a defeat. We focused on what mattered. Fred. His presence made such a difference in Cyril's life giving Cyril a reason for living, a reason to keep going. Cyril's ghost found a host in Fred walking him to heaven's door.

The foundation of Fred's world no longer existed.

Life had betrayed him.

What would the next action be? One can never tell with humans, they are so unpredictable. Would they euthanize him? As a full-grown dog, would anyone care enough to allow him a good life?

We clashed with authorities who pronounced Fred, unadoptable. In our debate, we disputed the reasons - anxiety issues and cats. In short, Fred was not perfect.

The pound lacked employees and finances to walk or bathe him. They accepted keeping Fred two weeks. Problems finding a permanent home in BC for a seven-year-old dog, without medical records, on such short notice seemed impossible. We refused to allow Fred to become a boomerang dog, shifted from one family to the next. Bringing him back to Quebec appeared unreasonable. Then, my sisters pointed out: the word “dog” spelled backwards read “GOD”.

I had contemplated before coming to a decision. We had to take this chance or we would be missing a special part of Cyril. His message was clear: pets are love and should not be disposed of!

Hesitant to take on this mission, I set my mind on doing justice, for the goodness Fred accomplished and according to what Cyril would have done. I made every effort to take hold of my insecurities and erase the panic while I still had the strength. The bitter truth remained if unsuccessful, we would face another void.

Fred realized the dilemma long before we did. He recognized death, yet refused to allow Cyril to face it alone. Busting the bonds, he beckoned to the human world searching for a response. Knowing death was imminent; he found comfort laying his paw over him to keep him warm. That is how Mike found them, wrapped around each other.

He showed no signs of aggression as authorities retrieved him, just those of undying loyalty.

Peacefully, Fred stared into fathomless space worshipping in mystery. Audacious as it may seem, Fred held a religious “wake” in remembrance of Cyril, suppressing all food. His water consumption was down to a bare minimum. He knew.

He had feelings, spirit, and soul.

We could choose to walk blindly ignoring the truth. Dogs are family members! Nevertheless, it would remain the sin in our hearts to turn down the occasion to save Fred and a tragedy for us all.

Rational decisions regarding Fred's new home required consideration. He was a big dog needing the proper living space to run and explore without surrendering a cat's life. Doggie friends were imperative.

Yanic owned two cats and lived in a condominium. Although she agreed to take him, the condominium rules overruled the possibility.

Stephen had a cat and dog. The cat was a problem.

I felt under qualified and still had issues with a dog in the house especially one Fred's size.

In all fairness, we based our decision on a ballot since Ann and Karen showed interest.

From: Lynda Roy

*To: b_sharp; d-laforest; noulton; rector.stmary; Sheila_*

CC: ca9inn; jayroy; polabeara; yanicroy

*Subject: ***UPDATE***: News from Fred!*

Date: Fri, 4 Dec 2009 11:14:46 -0500

Hi,

As you all know Cyril loved Fred unconditionally. He understood that Fred is an "angel". My sister Karen has pointed out that the word "dog" spelt backwards means "GOD" and that is not a coincidence! Animals were put here on earth for a reason. They love you! You can kick them, be cruel to them, but they keep coming back to you. Cyril would have never done that. He loved him so much. Cyril would have done anything for Fred and he gave up everything for him. If there was food for Cyril, then he made sure that there was food for Fred. If Fred was not welcome, then Cyril left. He would have preferred to be homeless than to leave Fred.

All we have left of Cyril is "Fred", his faithful companion who stood by his side to the very end. They shared the good times and the bad times, a bit of dinner... when there was one!

Fred deserves tender loving care, a home and more than anything else..., a family!

We, his brother and sisters, have decided to bring Fred home and provide for him. When Cyril came to Montreal, the last time he and Fred stayed here, Fred was happiest on my sister Ann's mini farm in the "Beauce" area near Quebec. She groomed him, cut his nails, walked him and even permitted him to sleep in the house. Fred even slept on her couch! I know she will pamper him preciously

The dog pound has told me they will not keep him very long. I will be sending them an email authorizing them to release Fred to Mike.

We are trying to arrange sending him by plane to us here. Air Canada does not ship live animals after Dec 15th. This means I have very little time to pull this all together.

I have advised Nancy to get the following items.

This is what we need to be with Fred when he goes via plane -

- 1. the dog leash,*
- 2. the dog collar,*
- 3. his dog bowls (don't wash them!)*
- 4. if there is a blanket in the car or house that Fred lay on - I need that too,*
- 5. I need to have a piece of clothing that smells like Cyril. Fred will recognize his scent and this will facilitate sending him on the plane.*

I also need help from you to purchase a cage and not any type of cage. Here are the specifications:

- Vari kennel brand- must be this kind of cage because of the plane. Available in Pet stores. Cost is approximately \$150-to \$200. Size must be high enough and wide enough for the dog to stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably in the cage. Fred weights approximately 100 pounds. The cage folds in but we will need to transport not only Fred but the cage as well.

We will pay for It, but I do need someone to help me to get it. Whoever can do that I will give them my MasterCard # to cover the charges. We will then need to get someone to help get him to the airport and then on board.

Time is an issue.

Karen owned several Shepherds, no cats and lived in the country. The ballot leaned in her favor.

Cyril's death was about to bring a major change in Fred's existence. We were certain he sensed the transition.

Fred had a hyper-attachment to Cyril and suffered from separation anxiety. When he stayed with Mike and Nancy, Fred became withdrawn and inactive. He developed a self-licking behavior, among other symptoms.

Concerned Fred might never recover from post-bereavement depression, we hoped a prompt return would avoid any additional stress.

A one-way train ride represented a substantial investment and animals needed an escort, a major hindrance being at opposite ends of the continent. We therefore pulled our efforts together in finding a cage. Although an unpleasant experience, flying was rapid.

He had never been without a human's presence. Left alone caged in a dark, unheated compartment within the cargo area, surrounded by whirling motors and deafening engines could prove disastrous. Without a soothing voice or comforting hands Fred might act in self-defense, causing havoc and even destruction.

Fred was a living creature, not cargo.

Obstacles stood in the way like a plague.

Flying from the Island had a major downfall. Flights were “indirect” stopping in Nanaimo, Toronto, and Montreal.

Direct flights to Montreal departed from the Mainland after a forty-minute drive to reach the ferry, followed by a two-hour ferry-ride to the Mainland and then some to Vancouver’s airport.

Would the airline accept to ship Fred unaccompanied? What would take place if the corresponding flight happened to delay?

We had 24 hours before West Jet’s last live animal cargo flight departed on Sunday, December 6th. They accepted crates a maximum size of 40 inches long x 27 inches wide x 30 inches high (101cm x 68.5 cm x 76 cm). The regulations indicated Fred needed a 1-inch (2.54cm) space above and enough room to move around and lie down.

Fred measured 36 inches (91.4cm) high. Finding a bigger cage was like pulling an elephant out of a hat.

Nancy phoned three local pet stores. They had nothing fitting. One merchant had a Pet Mate, Ferrari 550 in inventory 40.5 inches long by 29.5 inches wide by 30.5 inches high (101cm x 75cm x 77.4cm). To make matters worse, the largest was the Vari Kennel Giant: 48 inches x 32 inches x 35 inches (122cm x 81cm x 89cm). According to Fred’s height, it needed to be at least 38 inches high. We were 3 inches (7.6cm) short!

Karen emailed every breeder she knew across Canada and the United States. Every dog site in the country rallied for Fred. Liz Hickling of “Horse Lovers of Canada” recommended we contact Pat and Mark Dumont in Abbotsford. They were located on the Mainland. They might have a large crate as they fostered dogs from the SPCA. Although they were unable to help, they gave us two numbers to call “Country Feeds” and the “Abbotsford Animal Shelter”.

Penny Perry, another of Karen’s contacts, found an ad on CRAIGS LIST advertising an extra-large crate for sale at \$90 in Nanaimo, BC. Nancy called, but they confessed it sold without even getting around to discussing the size. There was a second posting, a 4-hour drive from Nanoose Bay on a narrow road to Ucluelet. Nancy contacted friends. Their daughter lived in Ucluelet. She arranged sending it by bus to Parksville.

No pet stores stocked even special-order cages for dogs 36 inches high (91cm). Were we being pessimistic or just realistic? Perhaps the kennel in Ucluelet was also too small. Doubt seeped in like a deteriorated mind wrestling with senility.

The winter Olympics due within weeks affected air regulations, in addition to inflated costs. In an Olympic race against time without a crate before December 15th, flying Fred would be impossible. The words of the local pound personnel, non-committal and unrelenting, distorting our hopes.

“Two-weeks, that’s all we can give you”.

While Nancy and Karen forged ahead in their search, I insisted authorities measure Fred, AGAIN, just in case! Nancy tried to reason with me about the chance we were taking. It was senseless to pay for a ticket if the airline refused Fred. She spoke to an Air Canada Cargo employee who declared the maximum total measurements allowed was 115 inches(292cm) (48 inches x 32 inches x 35 inches) or (121cm x 81cm x 89cm).

Fred needed to sit up without touching the top; not even the tip of his ears. The agent had seen ears freeze causing animal's injury. The family was required to sign a legal document when flying animals in cold conditions because of this.

What a small comfort knowing Fred had the smallest ears, we had ever seen!

Re: Fred you are coming home! Cyril says so!

From: Lynda Roy

To: Nancy McDonald

Cc: Rev Macluskie ; Sheila McDonald ; Steven Roy; Yanic Roy ;Ann Roy; Bill Sharp; d-laforest; Jason Roy; G Lalonde; Pierrette Gervais; TommyDiktakis; Sue Pelland; Tina Plante Roy

Sent: Sunday, December 06, 2009 5:36 AM

Subject: Fred you are coming home! Cyril says so!

Hello Nancy,

I thought about what you said last night regarding the chance we were taking to get Fred home, however if you never take a chance in life then you'll never know what you missed! We will be missing the only thing left of Cyril. That may be hard to understand, but love always is!

Here goes... we have decided to still go ahead and get Fred home because he does have a home! He cannot talk but I know he is just like Cyril and he would want to go home. He is not ready to die and we won't let him.

Please get the cage that you said was \$75.00 sent to you by bus. We will pay for it and the bus fares.

Karen has an Air Canada contact and she will give me the details once she has them.

Please do not give up on us yet and most of all, please do not give up on Fred!

Lynda

We remained disenchanted with the idea of leaving Fred behind for the winter months adjusting to a new life only to face another separation. However, boarding arrangements were indispensable should our plan fail.

Labeled as "non-adoptable", brought to mind the risk of euthanasia. We disagreed with the assessment. We accepted to end the life of an old terminally- ill, frail dog. In Fred's case, it was an outrageous betrayal of his love and devotion.

Our back-up plan showed up on the Internet: "Walker's Animal Rescue Center, a no kill, non-profit animal rescue located in Nanaimo, British Columbia... "We provide a temporary home for animals..."

A charitable organization since 2002, located 25 kilometers from Nanoose Bay. The Walkers had transformed their home into a "rescue center" and provided 24-hour assistance, seven days a week.

"I like to consider it more like a resort than a shelter because the animals are not kenneled and have the run of the roost. We exercise, comfort, and love them just like a pet owner would", remarked Stephanie Walker.

There were goats, piglets, rabbits, dogs, cats, horses, iguanas... and more. In fact, any animal needing assistance was a calling.

The numerous rescue stories and local newspaper write-ups attested her good work. A dog owner had suffered severe burns after his trailer set fire. She traveled two days to Port Alberni to rescue the dog. Once the owner recuperated, she drove all the way back to reunite them. That was just one story among many. Stephanie's love and devotion to animals kept her going throughout the years. Our gut feelings sketched a safe and happy haven until it was time to come home.

I called Air Canada December 7th, convinced the Airlines conceptualized a large shipment of oversized dogs on a forthcoming flight. Karen, Nancy, and I had inquired on several occasions.

Norm, a customer service representative, confirmed the last animal shipment for December 15th. Prepaid reservations needed booking 24 hours in advance. The controls required a one-inch clearance above the dog's head and the ability of the animal to turn around freely.

Like a fire burning in the snow, he sparked us with hope. They accepted custom-made cages. He sent a two-page document containing the specifications on materials allowed: design, ventilation, size, feed, and water containers, labeling, and preparations before dispatch.

Could someone build a "made-to-measure" crate in time for the flight?

Lucy Casmey lived on the Mainland. She offered to get Fred to the airport. Karen sold a white Shepherd to her years ago. Lucy promised to contact some of her old colleagues who worked in the in-flight operations at the Vancouver airport to see what they could do to help. She referred Karen to "Pets N Us" in Tsawwassen, close to the ferry terminal. They sold extra large crates for about \$170. She was prepared to pick it up for us.

Two daily flights left from Nanaimo to Vancouver, which then hooked up with direct flights from Vancouver to Montreal. Would Fred make it Friday, if we resolved the issue with the crate? He had to arrive at the check-in counter by 4:45am in Nanaimo to make the 6:00am flight to Vancouver. He would then transfer to the 8:45am or 10:55am flight from Vancouver to Montreal. The 8:45am flight scheduled arrival time in Montreal for 4:30pm. The later flight leaving at 10:55am, arriving at 6:40pm. If for some reason Fred missed the flight from Vancouver to Montreal as expected, Lucy agreed to pick him up.

Vancouver is a long way from Nanoose Bay and we needed to coordinate with the ferry's hours of arrival. I emailed the pound authorizing the release of Fred to Mr. Daniel Guimar of "Walkers Animal Rescue".

Mike's heart was as heavy as stone. Just setting eyes on Fred had become like a cold breathe from the grave drawing shadows. He condemned himself believing that somehow he could have saved Cyril. He nonetheless agreed to assemble the cage, ensuring there were no missing parts.

It was to arrive in Parksville at 1:30pm on Monday, December 7th.

Nancy received confirmation the kennel boarded the bus in Ucluelet but as they arrived to collect it, the stationmaster confessed the bus had gone and the kennel was missing. At the next terminal, in Nanaimo, the driver noticed he had forgotten to unload, so he loaded it on the next bus heading back south to Parksville.

Four hours had gone by and the day had vanished before the sun.

Although the kennel was too small Nancy inserted instructions within addressed to Stephanie and stored it away along with a white and black plastic bag. It contained one of Cyril's shirts (for scent), Fred's belongings, a new child's lap quilt, and a table runner Nancy quilted. She hoped the items would raise money for their auction.

We had no further news from Stephanie. The silence was unsettling.

Rescue Part II

"You are never given a dream without also being given the power to make it true. You may have to work for it, however."

-Richard David Bach (1936 -)

The crisis made Fred's fate uncertain. Despite collaborative efforts, we were only days from our deadline. Approaching the media seeking help proved the only way to heighten our time and efforts.

From: Lynda Roy

To: Max Harrold

Subject: Fred and Cyril

Date: Sun, 6 Dec 2009 09:56:36 -0500

My brother Cyril died last week on November 27th. He had just turned 58 years old and homeless. Operated for gangrene on Oct 17th and released from the hospital on Oct 23rd. He had a "PICC Line" which distributes antibiotics intravenously and a "CADD" machine connected to him. The "CADD" machine has an alarm on it so if the machine stopped working he was to call an emergency line for help. The "CADD" machine was for the amputation of his foot. He lived alone in a trailer with no hot water facilities and no toilet. The trailer is on a lot next to xxxx Marmor Road in Nanoose Bay, BC! His Doctor, Peter M., to whom I spoke, says he was always well groomed and never gave this impression. Just goes to show you can never judge a book by its cover. Deidre L (250-xxx-xxxx), an Outreach worker and Lee M., a social worker, can confirm... all among many others.

My brother's body was found three days later! Fred, his beloved friend, had never left his side. He stayed there with him the whole time. When the authorities went in for Cyril, Fred resisted and refused to leave. According to the coroner, Cyril was malnourished, diabetic and the gangrene had now spread, so he would have needed amputation below the knee.

I had called the RCMP on Friday Nov. 27th, asking them to go over because I sensed there was something wrong. They told me he was OK! Strange... since he died shortly after that. When the RCMP did go back the next Monday, they advised Mike McDonald not to contact us. They said they would contact the police here in Boucherville and they would let me know. I am still waiting for the police to contact me. I have called back the

RCMP and have left messages. I just want to know what happened. Why did no one call me back? I spoke to a Corporal V. who said Constable K. would know, yet no one called me back.

Cyril travelled with Fred from BC to Montreal and the Beauce and all the way back again in his truck. Those details are a book in its self. Cyril loved Fred and Fred was his reason for living. We now have to get Fred home.

Presently Fred is at a pound (250-xxx-xxxx). I have contacted Tamara and Meagan there. They will only keep Fred for a limited period. We asked them to measure Fred. They say he is 36" (91cm) from the paws to the top of his head. They cannot put him up for adoption since he does not like cats and tell me that they cannot take that chance.

Fred is a very big dog. We have contacted West Jet and Air Canada who has confirmed that the maximum size of crate they accept is 48" x 32" x 35" (122cm x 81cm x 89cm). Apparently, they use this size to ship Great Danes. Fred is 1" (2.54cm) over this crate size so we are not even sure if the Airline will accept this. We have found a crate that size; however, we must have it sent by bus to Nanoose Bay, which will take a minimum of a day.

Air Canada will not ship live animals after the 15th of December due to the cold. The only way we can save Fred is to get him out before then and we are running the Olympics against time!

Please help us! Here is a picture of Fred and Cyril.

Lynda Roy

I informed the reporter my brother was homeless only to realize it distorted an image partially true. In a broader sense, he lived under undesirable conditions in a metal box under the trees without an indoor toilet or hot water, in the dead of winter his body invested with gangrene. His circumstances remained the lesser of two evils, the other, having no physical shelter. How difficult it must have been.

I looked at homelessness as a critical outsider, like eyes hiding behind tinted glasses minimizing exposure to ultra-violet rays. I had forgotten that people in poverty have to fight just to live. I knew the man who was trying to get by. It made it my business to intercept, something I probably would not have done under different circumstances. His story was that of a brother, friend, father, uncle and husband. A familiar face, hoping tomorrow might be a better day, only to wake up fearing the future as a "has been".

I had every answer to his financial, moral, and physical burdens. I based it on what I considered bad budgeting decisions, the "Dharma of morality in action". His financial struggles were not just a "debit card curse". There were debilitating health problems.

Poverty like pollution is an environmental injustice logging deep within, and whichever way the wind blows, it is toxic. Plunged into poorness beneath his empty smile, his happiness had long folded its' wings. He had loosened his grip and watched what he wanted the most in life slip away.

Where I once found it easy to pass judgement, I realized his situation was unintentional. During the low points Cyril had put on a front concealing his financial ruin, illness, and depression. Being homeless was not part of his plan. We had made better choices; at least it was what he kept hearing, so he never stayed long. He preferred to blend into nature and woodlands. Perhaps it allowed him a way of living with fewer responsibilities...

Poverty remained a legacy with Cyril, haunted by throbbing shame, like a rotten toothache that just never goes away. I tried to put myself in his shoes, wondering what it would feel like to be broke: no house, no health insurance, inevitably unable to provide for a pet needing vet care and food. I instinctively knew they alternated, one day feeding himself and the next day feeding Fred. The image of an expired driver's license, an empty gas tank, and an old car desperately needing a brake job and tires made me ill from stress. The second week of the month, he lacked money without any way of closing the gap.

He tired of this wheel of pitiful judgment and being grateful to others, tired of feeling helpless. His mistakes, he had paid for, accepting the outcome as a natural order. Why did we think this was a choice?

Poverty meant fewer choices. He knew how hard it was coping with illness, divorce, and misfortune. Fewer choices meant "no margins for error". Unfortunately, life only rarely allows us to get through it without making some mistakes. No one can declare oneself perfect.

There were memories I knew he would rather forget. Being poor meant fighting with those he loved. It was not something he enjoyed. Poverty was never wondering why he chose to be so. He knew how hard it had become, where his last dollars came from and how much money he lacked. It addressed similar issues to alcohol, the only difference being the substance.

As his body dwindled, his faith increased and an intensely human man with weaknesses and courage astonished me with his determination to surmount the obstacles.

He had seen "the downside of up and everything between", (as in the song "What's it like" by Everlast). Cyril, experienced poverty learning intangible values just as he had the price of everything else life offered. It was a faith without the cutting-edge on which to slash others with cruelty, judgment, or biased intolerance. Throughout it all, he kept alive the love he had for his family and friends.

On December 8th, a small picture of Cyril and Fred appeared on the front page of Montreal's "The Gazette", the caption read: "FRED THE DOG: He's too big to fly home". The full editorial, written by Max Harrold, within view of the first section of the newspaper, entitled "A true friend to the end". A photograph accompanied the article taken at Sheila's driveway, just prior to Cyril's departure to Vancouver in March 2009. Cyril stood next to his old, second-hand Jeep waving goodbye as Fred reclined onto his haunches, the ground covered with a snowy white lining. The editorial highlighted the circumstances leading to the events; Fred's loyal devotion and the obstacles we were facing to get him home.

The public's interest spawned a flood of responses. Fred became headlines in the "Nanaimo Daily News", "The Province", the "Edmonton Journal", the "Times Colonist", "The Calgary Herald", "The Ottawa Citizen", the

“Harbour Star”, the “Windsor City Star”, and the “Victoria Times Colonist”, to name just some! The captions varied from “Sister wants dead brother’s dog shipped across Canada” to “Dogs devotion inspires rescue efforts”. Clearly, the story of a homeless man orphaned-dog inspired readers all across Canada!

CTV news reporter, Jonathan Bartlett did the first TV newscast of Fred. It aired on the National News in the evening December 8th. Within the broadcast, Fred verbalized his discontentment as he kicked and howled with impatience, trapped within the chained links of the confine. He had reached the threshold magnitude of his distress. CTV did a second newscast when we released Fred to Walker’s Rescue followed by yet another news update on December 9th.

The Gazette ran a third story on Friday, December 11th: “Sister hopes loyal dog can travel home after man’s death”. Once again, it appeared in newspapers across Canada and readers’ offered help.

Our progress abruptly paralyzed on December 14th. We faced additional challenges. Of no-fault of her own, Stephanie encountered delays attending to a dog requiring an urgent visit at the vets on the mainland. Ice layers forming over the roads had further complicated matters.

Our hopes broke into pieces like a shower of hail. We missed the last plane.

On December 15th, The Gazette’s article, “Dogged determination”, displayed a photograph of Stephanie Walker beside Fred. For this occasion, the owner of “Dogs N Suds” offered him a complimentary grooming session.

The media continued covering the events on December 16th with front-page news. This time, the editorial occupied almost the entire tabloid. His stunning good looks propelled our hero to stardom! Wearing a blue and white printed scarf the article read, “From B.C with Love: Fred the Dog Coming Home”.

“He looks stunning”, I proudly uttered to the store merchant, placing my coins on the counter.

“They’ll forget”, he muttered with a shrug. However, on December 24th in Rome, Italy, a man (Laurent) who described himself as a “well traveled soul” blogged about “A wonderful Canadian Christmas story”.

This sad event had turned into a beautiful Christmas tale!

Fred’s story aired on CTV news again, winning more hearts.

Overwhelmed with propositions, generosity continued to resonate. Linda-Nancy Colizza of Hellmann Worldwide Logistics approached us. The company was a major freight forwarder in Montreal with offices throughout the world.

Among the other offers were those from Melanie Pellerin, Frank Palumbo, and John Martzouco - “Miata man”, as I called him.

With a true optimistic approach, John was as devoted to his car as we were to Fred. In my days of gloom, he explained how he would remove the passenger seat, driving from Montreal to BC and back, with Fred in his Miata. His plan was hitching an insulated doghouse behind the car. This way, Fred had accommodations if motels refused him. I doubted Fred would fit in his tiny sports car unless he removed the seat and drove “topless” in December! We declined his offer, feeling it was something of a “Mission Impossible”! Our main objective was getting Fred home safely using the best traveling accommodations possible. He had undergone enough stress.

Sheila and I spent many long nights on the phone. We spoke of Cyril, Fred and family – and now ... “Our” family, as our lives intertwined.

“CH Robinson Transport contacted me via The Gazette. They own a fleet. Their drivers could pass Fred from one trucker to another until they reach Montreal”.

To my amazement, Sheila knew them! Fifty-five years ago, the McDonalds lived in Lachute, Quebec. Mike, her brother, played with the two sons who lived across the street, “the Robinsons”. Mr. Robinson owned a small trucking company. When the McDonalds moved to Montreal, the two neighbors kept in contact. In fact, one summer, Mike's mom was ill and Mike's sister (Mary) lived with the Robinsons until Jo McDonald (the mother) was better. When Mrs. Robinson died years later, the families lost touch. Seemingly, the son had turned it into a successful trucking company.

What a coincidence: Fred's story reuniting these two families after so many years!

The Robinsons knew of no connection to the McDonalds. This company, with headquarters in Minneapolis, MN, around since 1905, operated as a third-party logistics.

The news had traveled across the border to the United States.

Concerned about safety and the cold weather, we wanted Fred traveling in a heated compartment. We worried the drivers might put him in the container section. Robinson's transport would handle Fred to different drivers so they could not guarantee this would not happen.

Sheila and I discussed the different possibilities of getting Fred home. Stephanie of “Walkers Animal Rescue” proposed a man who had adopted “Greycie” a three-legged dog from her. He had offered to drive across the country, bringing Fred home to us, but unforeseeable weather represented a dangerous trip for everyone involved.

Stephanie sent me a picture of Fred and Greycie. Fred's facial expression showed pure, honest feelings. He had fallen in love!

With Fred on the front pages of the newspaper and weeks of coverage in different media, old acquaintances resurfaced. Almost half a decade later, on December 8th, 2009, Honorary Colonel of the Canadian Grenadier Guards, Fred Caron wrote to the “Montreal Gazette”. Cyril's story had caught his eye. They were friends in the regiment. Cyril had teased Fred about eventually naming his dog after him.

He ensured me the next Remembrance Day ceremony would include a mention of Cyril.

Curious to know if there was a resemblance to “our Fred”, I requested a picture. Colonel Fred Caron stood to the left side of the Queen, in October during an audience on her last visit to Ottawa.

-----Original Message-----

From: Fred Caron

Sent: Tue 12/8/2009 4:22 PM

To: Harrold, Max (Montreal Gazette)

Subject: Cyril Roy

Dear Mr. Harrold:

I read your article today. I believe Cyril was the same person I once served with in the Canadian Grenadier Guards and was a close friend although we lost touch some years ago... Please feel free to give this email address to his sister whom I would like to contact.

Sincerely yours

Fred Caron, CD, Q.C. / Fred Caron, CD, c.r.

Assistant Deputy Minister / Sous-ministre adjoint

Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians

The phone rang constantly. Cyril's dog, Fred, had exposed himself to the media. I became his voice. It was Shuyee Lee, a reporter for CJAD radio. After a short interview, the News Director, Chris Pare, invited me to speak on the "Ric Peterson Show". It aired at 4pm, the busiest time of the day, on the return home from work for most listeners.

Ric Peterson had suggested a single question: "Can you tell us a little about your story?" On two occasions, he tried slipping in a word but there was too much to say and too little time.

The interview lasted ten minutes and heard by tens of thousands that afternoon. I recaptured the events, the moment of Cyril and Fred's first encounter seven years prior, their unique relationship, their loyalty and courage... and our struggles to bring Fred home. I went on about Walkers Animal Rescue, a no-kill, non-profit organization, which came to our rescue. I quoted Stephanie, who described Fred as "*a friendly giant with a sparkling personality*". In conclusion, Fred had a right as a family member!

Frank Palumbo then addressed the population, explaining how he would precede bringing Fred across Canada.

Although we missed the deadline, we expected Fred to arrive by van. Frank Palumbo, president of IDC-KYD Inc, offered to manage and pay for the trip finding just the right "dog loving" drivers to do it. More important than money itself, he reached out giving us his time and efforts, helping us fulfill a dream we may have given up on. His warm human awareness had a deeper meaning, conveying the reality of what the spirit of Christmas means.

From: Lynda Roy

To: Frank Palumbo; Walkers rescue; Max Harrold

Subject: Fred

Date: Tue, 15 Dec 2009 13:11:18 -050

Hello Frank,

Thank you for your offer to get Fred home to us. I have outlined the details, which you needed.

1. Stephanie Walker of the Walkers animal rescue is taking care of Fred.

<http://walkersarc.com/index.htm>

*Stephanie has a crate large enough; she has Fred and is located in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada
telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx*

Email: walkers rescue

*2. Fred is a Kugsha bred, 7 years old weights I estimate approximately 80 to 100 lbs. I think Stephanie Walker
can best confirm this.*

3. Fred does not like cats

*4. Health wise Fred has hot spots. I have been told that it is not serious and can be treated. Once again,
Stephanie Walker can best fill you in. I do not think that there is anything else to worry about. Have I missed
something? I hope not, but if I have please call Stephanie at xxx-xxx-xxxx.*

5. My coordinates are: Lynda Roy

(xxx) xxx-xxxx

*Frank, this is a joint effort on the part of all my remaining siblings Stephen Roy, Ann Roy, Karen Roy, Yanic
Roy, I as well as Sheila McDonald whom we feel we have adopted throughout this whole time.*

*As family members, we voted Karen would be taking in Fred. She has all it takes and doggie friends to keep
Fred company. She is a licensed breeder and has the experience. Karen's number is home (xxx) xxx-xxxx and work:
(xxx) xxx-xxxx.*

*If ground transport is what is being used, then we are concerned and do not want Fred to be traveling in the
back part of a truck. It must be the cab or nothing. It is all about Fred and I know that you understand that.*

*I will be away from Dec 23th and returning Dec 28th but only in the evening and I do not want anything to
happen during this period.*

Thank you for your understanding.

We made a list of items preparing for the trip, including medical papers, bowl, food, collar, blanket, an extra long leash, and a piece of Cyril's clothing retaining his scent.

Originally, Frank planned flying two of his drivers to Vancouver with intentions of driving back to Montreal with Fred in a truck. However, days later he revealed a new plan. His wife (Melanie Pellerin) and her girlfriend (Christianne Hendershott) were flying out to BC, and then riding the train back with Fred. He paid for the flight while Via Rail offered complimentary first-class train tickets for their return.

On December 18th, I contacted Walkers' to obtain a clean bill of health. We needed a signed document stating Fred was well enough to travel if we wanted him to arrive January 5th... *our Christmas miracle!*

Sharing intimate moments near a cozy, warm fireplace, enjoying dinner with family and friends, manifested what most families did January 1st, 2010. This long tradition now altered for Stephanie Walker, Tom Lawrence, Frank Palumbo, Melanie, and Christianne.

On New Year's Day, Melanie and Christianne boarded a plane heading for Vancouver to bring back a dog to a family they never met.

Stephanie headed off with Fred on the 12:30pm ferry while Tom Lawrence, a volunteer at the Walkers Animal Rescue, went to pick up Melanie and Christianne at the Vancouver airport.

Stephanie agreed to meet them. She drove our "gentle giant" twenty minutes away, then on the ferry (another 2 hours) and an additional 40 minutes to the railway station.

January 2010, we never forgot! The generosity of spirit reigned in the hearts of many.

Days before Christmas, family and friends gathered to prepare for Fred's homecoming, building him a deluxe doghouse. This community project amused us. It reminded me of the "Snoopy" comic series where the dog belongs to everyone in the neighborhood.

It turned out Fred disliked it. Contrary to the real "Snoopy", he never slept on the roof. He refused under all circumstances to set a paw within. Perhaps, if it had resembled an Igloo or a log cabin instead of a deluxe condominium, we might have convinced him, but Fred never appreciated anything surrounded with a fence. They were unpleasant memories. Besides, Houdini lives within our escape artist, Fred, who can excavate deep trenches underground.

With little left to do, we waited for his return.

The Train

“Angels exist, only sometimes they do not have wings, they ride the rails”
- Lynda Roy

*Via Rail Press Release - December 23, 2009 -
“VIA Rail and good Samaritans to bring Fred the dog from Vancouver to his Montreal family”*

Melanie, Christianne, and Fred entered Via Rail’s “Pacific Central Station” located on Station Street in Vancouver, on January 1st 2010. This heritage building of neoclassical architecture housed seven tracks.

The platform filled with passengers, baggage wagons, and crates as crew members and porters contributed to the flurry of activities. The intense excitement of the Christmas season still lingered, like the last crackling embers of a fire. It was one of utter bliss. Warmth and humanity lingered in the air. In the bustle of activity climbing aboard, everyone smiled graciously, some exchanging New Year wishes.

All embarked on an unforgettable journey having a different meaning to different folks: adventure, Christmas vacations, honeymooners, business, and even a lifeline for some like Fred. Departing faces pinned to windows displayed citizens of all ages, young families with blanket-carrying children, students, middle-aged workers, and silver-haired fragile figures.

Inside the train, noisy compartment doors opened and closed. Everyone rushed to find a seat. Some headed to the skyline car that had large tables, others wandered around undecidedly, checking their tickets. Travelers carried backpacks, briefcases, newspapers, or books while others were in their bubble, listening to music on headphones.

A symphony of cell phones mixed-in with static conversations. A public announcement echoed on the loudspeaker, advising commuters of the special “guest” on board: a charismatic dog named “Fred”.

An information center had been set up in the coach, revealing news articles on our “Gentle Giant”. Via Rail had given Fred special permission to mingle with passengers on arrival at the stations for those intrigued.

Melanie and Christianne boarded with an armload of gifts, Fred’s personal belongings, homemade meals, and cookies Melanie prepared for him.

They were heading eastward, through 4 time-zones, a grueling 2,775 miles (4,466km) to Toronto’s “Union Station” before transferring onto a train to Montreal.

“The Canadian” constituted a doom observation car, passenger coaches, baggage car, dining, sleeping, and lounge cars. All were neatly furnished and decorated in pastel shades of silver, sky-blue and yellow.

The streamlined stainless-steel engine made an ear-splitting screech sounding off the whistle as the train slowly picked up speed in a thundering roar.

The 5-day trip incorporated 65 intermediate stops, 55 of them halting on specific passenger requests. The stoppages included Vancouver, Kamloops, Jasper, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Sioux Lookout, Sudbury, and Toronto.

Employees had volunteered to care for Fred the duration of the trip, but the company was unable to put the quality of their customer service at risk by assigning employees to take care of a dog. They accepted escorted animals and Frank Palumbo had offered the perfect solution: Melanie and Christianne.

Via Rail donated a “complimentary” first-class sleeper-cabin for them that included bunk beds with a private restroom and shower.

Fred lodged in a separate coach with the other four-legged traveling companions, each within their individual crate. Melanie had lined his with a blanket and placed a newly purchased squeaky-duck toy within.

Fred became the center of gravity for his guardians. Their attachment to Fred went beyond affection for a canine acting as “a little boy”. It is how Melanie described Fred – as a human in a dog’s body! It went further than just character and those who know Fred can understand.

The journey from Vancouver began on a balmy, sunny day with temperatures over the freezing point, through suburbs including Burnaby. On the right, the Skytrain and Pattullo highway bridges followed for miles. Nearing the New Westminster Bridge, they passed through several rail yards, loaded with parked metal-boxes, until coming into Gillford. When the coach reached the Thompson and Fraser river canyon crossings, over the river to Kamloops, sunset had fallen and there were starlit pinholes in the sky.

The view changed from rolling plateau to spine-boned coniferous forests and icy waterfalls slicing cliffs. Snowy-whipped peaks, like icing on a cake, skirted the narrow forested valleys, lumber yards, farmlands, and small communities. Clinging to the rugged rocks of Mount Cheadle (near Valemount), thunderous “Pyramid Falls” cascaded a stunning view of glacial walls of 300 feet (91m).

Wire guardrails protect the train from plunging into the mirrored waters of the Thompson River.

Creeping along the treacherous area of “Little Hells Gate”, they crossed a 240-foot (73m) bridge, near the “Valley of the Mountains”.

The railway ran at the base of the Canadian Rockies (Mount Robson), near Jackman on route to the jewel of the Rockies – “Jasper”.

The Jasper station housed Parks Canada offices, a café, and a souvenir shop. The throbbing train waited two hours in a winter wonderland where a vengeful winter returned.

Fred loved it and showed his appreciation winning the hearts of everyone touring the friendliest “dog town” on the planet. Every local shop kept a fresh bowl of water next to the doors for pets.

Fred needed no instructions, entering Via Rail lounges, scene by scene, shot by shot this was his screenplay. It was all about him. Fred had fallen prey to the cameras, from quick sweeping shots to those long and stationary ones. He was their focal element and remembering Fred was all that mattered. They were his fans. Again, in Jasper, he posed before leaving for Edmonton, with children and adults alike.

The landscapes changed in flashes, as daylight clung to the tracks, catapulting scenery through the frosty glass until night tinted windows with images of commuters within.

Passengers relaxed, enjoying the captivating scenery through the rugged mountains of the Pacific coast as the train echoed through the mountains and prairies. Some travelers appeared busy on their computers; others listened to music or glanced over recently purchased magazines and books. Several enjoyed drinks purchased from trolleys or meals soaking in the view daydreaming. A few played cards and board games.

Time slowed to the speed of long conversations. With curiosity, passengers showed empathy towards Fred's situation posing numerous questions.

Christianne and Melanie swayed with the movement of the train, up and down the aisle, between the passenger car and Fred. They spoiled him, stroking him, whispering words of encouragement throughout the trip.

Via Rail alerted them as they approached the stations, giving them the chance to disembark. Those "intermediate" stops had been exceptions for Fred, pausing long enough to exercise his legs and go about his business.

Fred yearned to go off into the wild as the winding rails curved through the land. It was a restless ride and the squeal of the brakes and glowing white lights approaching the stations offered a certain relief.

In Saskatoon, howling icy gusts of wind flung pellets in a begrudging temperature of minus 40 Celsius. It was déjà vu for Fred, who loved running through the fields.

In freezing weather, "Fred's gang" paraded at numerous stoppages. The brigade grew with each approaching destination, like an inaugural presidential victory celebration of Fred fans.

Winnipeg's "Union Station", a four-storey building with white limestone extended 350 feet (110m) along Main and Broadway Avenue. Arched-paired windows complimented the monumental main entrance. A spacious atrium with the most magnificent "Rotunda" led from a passenger tunnel to the platforms below. Parked on one of the eight tracks was "The Canadian". Fred descended, like a national hero, with Melanie and Christianne.

In a foot of fluff on a 4-hour stopover in Winnipeg, they explored the city while a change of crew members took over the service for the remaining of the trip.

A mechanical problem between Winnipeg and Sioux Lookout brought the train to a stop. It was longer than expected before the frozen engine kicked into motion.

Emergencies occur even on the splendor of tracks. Melanie dug like a gravedigger alongside Fred as he regurgitated in the snow. The journey had taken its toll. Fred was as limp as a strand of wool. He needed assistance climbing aboard. A pet first-aid kit was unprepared and Fred's dwindling health raised concern. Even the chief's gourmet dishes brought no relief. The possibility of delivering a dead dog had never occurred to them.

The recommended dosage of medication, given by four veterinarians, caused them anxiety. How dreadfully wrong could the vets be? Faced with a difficult decision and little time for hesitation, Christianne got off at Sioux Lookout into the nearest pharmacy while Melanie and Via Rail employees cared for Fred.

The meds had barely taken effect when a heavy freight train stalled on the tracks near Sudbury. Fortunately, the extra waiting time had allowed Fred some sleep before reaching Toronto, where the media waited his arrival.

"Union Station" on Front Street, the busiest hub of all, was a journey's end for some passengers. For Fred it represented meetings with reporters and the train's Public Relations representative in the Panorama lounge, prior to boarding the Toronto-Montreal train.

Fred had 4 hours 57 minutes with six stops, before reaching his final destination.

An occasional hint of sun peeked through the clouds the morning of Fred's arrival. The day filled with excitement preparing for his homecoming. The phone rang incessantly with offers for interviews from newspapers, television and radio stations.

Ann(sister) arrived from the Beauce the previous night. Yanic (sister) joined us the following day. Karen (sister) and Sherman (her husband) drove from Ontario. We rallied at Central station in the evening with Sheila, family and friends. Frank Palumbo and Via Rail's public relations representative arrived shortly after our arrival.

Driving into town, I gazed at the slushy snowflakes blurring our view, anchoring itself onto the windshield. Hating this damp, weak layer between snow and rain, knowing the roads could become hazardous I hoped it would cause us no further delays.

We arrived at "Central Station", a lavish old landmark ornamented with Art Deco friezes. The edifice is located in downtown Montreal. A splendid atrium houses several luxurious staircases to the platforms below. Long oak benches, varnished as smooth as silk, lined either side of the stairs. Assorted gate numbers, corresponding to the destinations, marked the panels at the top of the stairways.

Behind the ticket counter, two Via Rail employees stood in conversation. Adjacent to the information desk were numerous doors leading outside. On the opposite wall, one could find coffee shops, restaurants, pastry shops, and small stores selling candy snacks, periodicals, newspapers, and cigarettes for passers-by.

A menagerie of clocks and an imposing billboard, announcing arrivals and departures, drew my attention. Suddenly, the blaring news from the speakers announced yet, another delay!

I never heard the train rounding its way onto the platform below, hauling the world's greatest "Gentle Giant".

An empathic young man brought me to my senses. He was a passenger obviously impressed with this magnificent creature with paws the size of a boxing mitt!

I stood dazed in another world beyond this life in a semi-conscious state, lingering somewhere between the past and the present. "*Here he comes!*" The words jolted me back to reality as I fixed my stare at the large granite staircase bending time to this elegant historical building.

Long after rush hour, Central Station normally was semi-deserted, but friends and family had walked-in-grief alongside me. They continued to be a source of comfort and strength, making life easier every day.

Tommy had followed the events like a zealous forensic journalist, trying to establish credibility. A mash up of Fred clips furnished the walls of his office. He was present at my arrival.

At 8pm, the media, Via Rail's public relation correspondent, friends, family, and strangers, even "Harry the dog"...all waited to meet Fred!

The long, heartbreaking moment had come at last. Family reunited with Fred at 9:30pm on January 5th, 2010. The planned arrival for 5pm in Montreal delayed because of an immovable freight train on the tracks near Sudbury, in Northern Ontario. Just another major roadblock we faced.

Fred was underweight and his “hot spots” far worse than our last encounter yet he was home, his eyes glassy and vacant. Usually, he walked with a pompous gait behaving in an ostentatious manner. Lethargically he dragged himself up the stairs.

The trip had been tedious.

I sensed Cyril’s presence whispering “*Thank you Fred for all you have done....you no longer need to look out for the bears*”.

Red-eyed and fatigued, quiet tears rolled down Melanie’s face. She handed Fred over to us, sorry to see him go yet, happy to have been part of it all.

He proved to be just as Cyril bragged, “*a magnet*”, drawing people all along his way. He never ceased gaining in reputation. A “Kugsha” with an incredible sense of devotion, bearing a human’s name and an almost human nature became more popular than Santa that year!

Fred managed to bind families and total strangers together in a struggle getting him home over thousands of miles apart.

In a time when we question whether society still values basic principles of love, devotion, generosity, and human kindness, Fred reminded us they are still present.

New Beginnings

"Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. Love still stands when all else has fallen"
- Blaise Pascal

"Salut Bonjour!" a TV morning show, covered the emotional reunion the previous night and newspapers ran what we believed would be, the final story. Just when all had ended, CBC now wanted to film Fred in his new home.

In Montreal, on January 9th, Brendan Fraser premiered his movie: "Extraordinary Measures". In an interview with journalists, he monopolized the questions inquiring about Fred.

Again, on January 18th, Maclean's Magazine published an article: "Dog's best friend" about a heartwarming tale of a dog.

A legend touching the hearts of millions during the Christmas season of 2009 persisted throughout the media as readers followed Fred's journey.

CTV, CBC, Radio-Canada, and others continued the coverage as the newspapers printed articles of the day-by-day developments.

Home

"Though I know I'll never lose affection / For people and things that went before / I know I'll often stop and think about them / In my life I love you more"
- "In My Life" - The Beatles

Committed to Fred, family members opened a bank account contributing to his financial needs. Medical assistance is a costly investment.

We informed the veterinarian of Fred's background prior to his visit. They met for the first time on January 9th, just days after his return. Fred remained thoroughly compliant as the vet performed the routine weight check, vaccinations, and blood work. He appeared underweight and sluggish and had itchy-red skin inflammations called "hot spots". They had worsened due to his biting and licking behavior.

The blood tests came in two days later confirming a thyroid problem treatable with doses of "Eltroxin". To override his refusal to gulp down his medication, we administered it smuggled in cheese or a hot dog, a method proving quite successful.

Date: Wed, 13 Jan 2010 15:51:24 -0800From: Karen

Subject: Re: [RawDogCanada] Re: THYROID problem-FRED & Meds

To:RawDogCanada;stary_eyed_angel;Horseloversofcanada;lyndaroy;bird@frog;white_shepherd_lovers;ws_club_canada;leadfoothiker; pregnancy_and_the_breeder; mary

He will be re-tested again in 4 wks. I have already noticed some change... ALTHO it could be that he's beginning to feel "At Home", he goes to work with me every day, since Monday. He started his Meds Monday evening... so tonight he was RUNNING! I am so thrilled to watch this HUGE Bear of a dog running! I also find him somewhat MORE alert then before. I will know for sure tho in the next 2-3 wks but Janet my DVM did say I would see changes in a few days of Fred taking meds. Good old FRED had to go the potty on our way home... he just surprises me with how he tells us he needs or wants something! He would PAW at my husband and bark. He generally sits or lies down and is quiet but this was different! We got home and he RAN... he was so as molasses when he 1st arrived... so he raced out into the back where he prefers to potty and RAN back. This was NOT Fred last week. Tonight again he ran AROUND the entire house outside in the snow so something good is happening here.

Karen

By February, Fred gained three pounds eating two meals a day. He propelled down the stairs, like a bull in a China shop, in mouth-watering anticipation of a proverbial crumb, skidding across the linoleum floor.

Fred became our healing tool.

His highly developed sensory system showed a mature emotional development. We verbalized our loss, but Fred did it “purely” through emotions. He had his difficulties. We realized he experienced sorrow. He would glance at us retracting subtly, preferring to be alone. It had gone a step further. Karen found him on a comforter that belonged to Cyril. We interrupted his pain from our own emotions. We understood it was akin to ours. During those moments, he had flashbacks. At other times, he would wake up from nightmares reliving the trauma. His love never betrayed him.

He progressed adapting to his new home and four-legged friends, Whisper, Chelsey, and Banta. Karen’s place passed the test. It had “gone to the dogs”! Fred became Karen’s shadow, following in her every footstep.

Every day brought new findings.

The first months, he escorted Karen and Sherman to work. Fred loved the clean air taunting him on the drive to the office. His intelligence surprised us. He could open windows in the van, all on his own! If you dared close it, he would roll it down again smiling, sticking out his head in the cool breeze.

A crate installed in the office, lined with his blanket, permitted him to nap during the day. He wore his work uniform greeting the clients, posing for them as they erased pictures making room for those of our new celebrity. They texted their loved ones, as if his picture was a personalized autograph of someone important. Then, they returned with their children.

Knowing Fred meant serious business, having a positive outcome. A woman found out Sheila knew Fred and employed her, adding a new customer to Sheila’s existing business.

Late February Fred retired. The time coincided with Whisper’s new litter of Shepherd’s.

On April 3rd, Fred performed a heroic act. Whisper’s six puppies were seven weeks old. The sub pump partially flooded the basement, causing wailing puppies to alert Fred. The water had reached their bedding area. Mystified by his uncanny telepathy, Fred rushed to warn Karen but to his dismay, she was sound asleep. He jumped into her bed, insisting she follow him. Fred had come to the rescue!

Fred had occasional spats, chasing a cat across the road. He turned his “Cyril slow mode” into a “missile” in less than a flashing second, powered like a shot from a gun. After reprimand, he pouted in revenge.

Fred received an offer to appear in the St-Patrick’s Day parade, in downtown Montreal. We declined. It rained all day and Fred despises the rain. Snow flakes are different. They make him act silly! Fred often brought in the great outdoors. Nordic winters are a distant memory to him, something to indulge in, better than mud and rain. Coating his wiry fur, he would transform into a huge snowball racing through the flakes.

On April 10th, Melanie and Frank invited Fred to a dinner party held in his honor. Twelve guests and three dogs attended. In celebration, Melanie prepared homemade dog biscuits and turkey for our four-legged friends while we enjoyed a delicious Italian dinner.

As spring arrived, Fred explored. Some of his adventures became loving moments of tyranny. Ambushed by a curious bewitched plastic bag, he skittishly backed in horror as it leaped toward him. “Run!” cautioned his instincts, as a muffled squeak tricked his cunning predator skills. His inquisitiveness wanted to know what possessed this curious specimen. In all his travels, he had never seen such a thing allowed on his prohibited territory. In a “yip” of excitement, out wandered a mouse. First, he glared uncertain if it was safe to pounce or, better to run away from the furry beast that disappeared into nature.

Mortified, I accepted my first doggie duties January 14th, 2011: a miracle! I am a fastidious housekeeper and Fred was coming to stay. Until this moment, we had allowed no dog within. Fred looked big outside, but inside a house, he was gigantic! I was living a version of “Honey I shrunk the kids!”

It was Fred’s first time away from Karen and a year since his return. The first day he seemed depressed, staring out the front door waiting for her to return. No amount of encouragement would make him move. He slept in the foyer, huddled on the carpet at the bottom of the stairway, persuaded she would arrive any minute to take him away. I pampered him, hoping this quality time would help overcome his stress, brushing and massaging Fred until his fur stood on ends. He loved every dog-shedding moment, but remained firm on his guard in the foyer.

The next night, he did his dog dreaming next to my bed. Never in a million years would I have fancied seeing a dog lying next to me. It truly was an unforgettable moment!

I discovered his passion for walking. In three brief days, he made more friends than I could in a lifetime. The day after Fred went home, the doorbell rang. Seven-year old Hugo wanted to know if Fred could come out to play. According to his mother, Hugo was afraid of dogs. Fred’s size was intimidating but he had the biggest heart on the planet. Everyone just loved him!

From: Lynda Roy

To: Sheila Mcdonald; lynnehylan

CC: polabeara; suepelland; monique.carriere

Subject: News on Fred

Date: Tue, 18 Jan 2011 13:10:35 -0500

Hi,

Well, here's the news... We survived!

Sheila asked me if I had prepared for Fred's visit so I did the only thing I could think of... I bought hot dogs for him! I gave him one and then he started gagging. Could not figure out why! Then I put on my glasses and realized

there was plastic wrapping I had to remove (...oops!) It was great! Fred delivered me doggie dodo all gift-wrapped in plastic wrap that day. No mess! No need for doggie bags! Just wonderful!!!

Then, when we went to the park, I realized I should have done a survey in the neighborhood to see who has male dogs, just in case this was an issue. Too late... so all I did every time I saw a dog was SCREAM to the owner "IS IT A MALE?" It worked! I never had a problem. Then I found out:

1. The size of your home needs to be in proportion to the DOG. Fred looks big outside when you see him, but he is even BIGGGGGERRR in a house! Or did my house suddenly shrink? (Was not there a movie on this? Honey I shrunk the house... or was it the kids?

2. If you want to lose some weight, get yourself a FRED: 3 days = 3 lbs. He loves walking and enough is just never enough! And don't tell him we'll do it again later... he will remind you!

3. He makes a great secretary as you can see in the picture.

4. If you brush him long enough, he looks as if he gained 10 lbs and turns into a fluff ball!

I enjoyed his stay. He was excellent. After only 2 outings, he realized he needed to wipe his feet and did it himself! He was very polite to everyone and made new friends throughout the city!

I got a one-week cold treatment from Claude before his arrival but guess what? He is talking to me!!! And next time, won't be so bad. I think he will be a little more accepting.

First night, Fred did not get too close to him and slept on the carpet downstairs. Next night, Fred decided it was time to get over the cold shoulder and slept with us... (yyyooouppi!!!). No, not in our bed, but next to our bed! He loves that nice thick rug Yolande gave me which is next to our bed! Fred even accepted that we left him alone in the house for some quiet time and when we got back, everything was the same as it had been. No mess! No couch (no need for those "stay off the couch" pads!)

WHAT A GREAT DOG!!!

Hugs to you Fred

xxxx

P.S.: So much for a lady who knows nothing about Dogs!

On June 4th, 2011, Fred went to Ann's; time for sharing the joys and frustrations of Fred. He lives on her mini farm in the Beauce where he once watched Cyril chasing turkeys. His laid-back life allows him existence without fearing lack of food, family, or love.

You cannot miss him: the friendliest dog with the soft blinking eyes and low wagging tail, the champion digger, the couch potato, the one who adores squeaky toys. He will give you an apologetic glance when doing

something wrong. He can be as stubborn as a spoiled boy can! Fred is a goofy, headstrong, big-white dog who loves being with people... especially those who love him. He “coos and woo-woos” howling with the pack. He is *the special one*... reminding us so much of Cyril!

This tale is about life and beyond and believing in soul. I believe soul survives the death of our body. I also think Cyril’s soul has inhabited Fred, and is the very essence of his being!

Mike

Mike never recovered from the death of his dear friend. His grief remained present. He was never the same. Mike sold the trailer and stopped going to Marmor where he loved spending time with Cyril. The pain struck like a razor blade through his heart.

During summer 2010, on a trip east for his daughters' wedding I hoped to meet him. Unfortunately, the reunion never took place.

August 13th, 2010 nine months after my brother died, the doctor diagnosed Mike with acute myeloid leukemia, a life threatening disease.

Mike died January 27th, 2011 just months after Cyril. Reverend Macluskie held the ceremony in St-Mary's church.

The Letter – 1998

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen."

- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

This book came to be not as I had originally planned. A bittersweet blessing came from Cyril's letter, dated February 21st, Philip's birthday. It took me on a different path to the one I had imagined. Cyril gave away a part of himself for no other reason than sharing his love. "Grief hurts. It is life altering, overwhelming and meddles deeply, although it is a fated part of life and of love".

21 February, 1998

Richmond, BC

Dear Lynda,

Once again, I want to say thanks for all the help you've given me over the years, and also to let you know how much I appreciate all the support you've given me in so many ways.

I received the money orders and cheque in the mail the other day, and again, thanks for your efforts. Please let Dad know how grateful I am when you see him. I called him to wish him a happy birthday, and to say thanks, but I had to leave a message.

Some time ago, you had asked me to write a chapter from childhood for a book you were writing. I spent some time thinking about what I might have to say about a number of the events from our lives, and unfortunately, I think that a lot of it is fairly negative. I would have liked to perhaps focus on the positive events a little more, but the other side to that coin was also to tell it like it was for me.

I guess in many ways, it's simply a collection of a few events that took place, that I felt had major impacts on me, and to some degree, had to have bearing on the events in all of our lives. You know, I've learned that we don't

all deal with things in the same way, and it's important for me to not judge anyone else, but rather to just have given my own perception of the way things were for us.

I'm sure that if you look at the same events from another perspective ... perhaps one of the other kids, or even yourself, that your perceptions would be completely different from mine. I tried to simply stay with my own feelings of those times, and to also try to carry some of those feelings into the present. While there are certainly some life-long and long-lasting consequences for the ways in which we were brought up, I truly feel that we've all had a chance to make some changes to not repeat some of the same dysfunctional behaviors we were brought up with. Clearly, I know I am not perfect, and if anything, find my shortcomings today more frustrating than ever. However, I don't need to make apologies nor excuses. I simply need to try to become the best person I can be, and to deal with the events in my life today, rather than running away, as I used to in the past.

I'm not at all certain that the information I've written is what you are looking for. I would be happy to provide you with more, if you can tell me specifically what you might be interested in. I left a lot out, simply because I didn't want to convey a sense of doom and gloom, nor did I wish to implicate or blame anyone.

On the other hand, I know that given the perceptions of all of you when events were happening, it would be very easy to understand any lingering resentments towards me. Unfortunately, I don't think that many of us have the chance or opportunity to sit down together and tell each other very much about our true inner selves.

Anyway, ... enough of that for now. If you feel you would like me to provide you with any additional thoughts or memories, or anything more specific, just know that all you need to do is say so, and I'll be happy to oblige.

So, thanks again... and good luck with the book!! !

Love ya!

Cyril

HERE GOES!!

You know, during the last few years, I've been given the opportunity to have a good look at my life, and hopefully to make some very important and very necessary changes; unfortunately, we don't always make changes that we want to make as quickly as we (or others) would like. But, fact is, that this is about me, and about some of my memories. And, truth be known, memories always help us to understand, and I believe that the more we can understand where we come from, the better we can understand why we do things the way we do them.

For me, this is part of the process of healing... and changing.

My first very conscious memory of childhood is of having run away from home at the ripe old age of about 2 1/2 years. I can still feel the pain I was feeling that day. I remember the day itself, almost like it was yesterday - bright sunshine, beautiful blue sky, and great big puffy white clouds scattered around. Oh, and it seemed quite cold that day. I guess what I remember best are actually two things. The first was that I was pulling my seesaw behind

me, and the second was that I was feeling a lot of emotional pain. Oh, I didn't know what it was at the time, just that it hurt a lot, and I was crying. During the last five years and a bit, I've tried really hard to remember what the pain was about, but still haven't been able to do that. Sure, I ended up going back home, but I'll never forget the pain I was feeling.

I don't wish to dwell on the past, and particularly not to convey any feelings of having been a "victim" in any way. But this memory of running away, and the feelings of pain, I think set the mood for most of the feelings I experienced as a kid growing up in our family environment. And certainly of many of the feelings I experienced well into my adulthood, and still do to this day, although certainly not to the same degree.

A few years ago, my counsel or (Alcohol and Drug Abuse here in Richmond) tried for months and months to tell me that I had to deal with my anger. I argued with him for all those months that I wasn't angry. And at the time, I really believed that I wasn't angry at all. ... that I was simply quite willing to put the past behind me, and to do the best I could with this second chance I was being given. Little did I know, that buried deep inside me was all kinds of anger ... anger at having lost a childhood.... anger at having been my mother's keeper for so long.... anger at my brothers and sisters for having had to look after them.... anger at my Grandparents for having been so damn careful to make sure that no one knew what was going on.... anger at having to always be the one who was supposed to understand everyone else ... after all, I was the oldest.. I was supposed to be more mature ... I was supposed to be more responsible ... I was just supposed to know better ... anger at mom for always breaking her promises yeah right. .. She was never going to drink again.... anger at being embarrassed in front of my friends...angry that the whole world knew what was happening in my home, and that I was stupid enough to believe that my lies could cover it all up ... angry at myself that whatever I did was never good enough for anyone ... especially Dad. All I wanted was for people to be proud of me... to say to me, Cyril, we love you, we know you are doing your best, and we are proud of you.

But enough of that for now. I remember running away another time, this time in Ste- Therese, in the middle of winter. When I think of it now, I know I wasn't running away at all. I just wanted for someone to say "Please don't go, we need you". I guess I really needed to hear it. Fact is that I lived for many years hoping someone (are ya listening Dad??) would say to me that they needed me. In AA, I've been told that the definition of insanity is doing the same things over and over again, expecting different results. I guess in many ways, I'm still insane! Because, I spent most of my life running away from things, hoping that someone would say "Please don't go".

I left home on February 12, 1968, That was the day I left for good, Mom had decided to tell me a few days earlier in a drunken stupor, that Dad wasn't my father, and that he wasn't Philip's either. That one really hurt, and I refused to believe it, although something inside me kept telling me that it had to be true, Mom had been getting more violent with me, and I was becoming more afraid of what she might be capable of. The night that I left home, she had attacked me with a Pepsi bottle, and had hit me several times with it. Truth is I was also afraid of what I might do to her; I had come to hate her. I hated my life, and everything about it. School was a disaster, and anything that had been important to me had been taken away from me, Even my friends thought I had to be nuts for the things I was going through, And the funny thing was that absolutely everybody knew what was going on at home, If these things had happened today, mom would have been sent to jail for the abuse and neglect. And, I had another equally

important reason for leaving home", I wanted to be with Dad, I thought he needed me, I also thought that I wanted to find out for myself who he really was, I really figured that it was impossible for anyone to be as bad as he had been made out to be.

I might mention that it was at about this time in my life that drinking became something I would do more regularly, it gave me the thing I most treasured at that point in my life, and I thought it was a really special gift. It was the gift of laughter, and how I loved to laugh. I actually remember sitting down for dinner in Pierrefonds many years before, and how everything went nuts because the kids were laughing at the table. Dad ended up throwing a pot of boiling soup, and later that night mom went after him with a pair of scissors. It was only a few days later, that mom decided to saw her double bed in half. Tell me we weren't all nuts!!

I did an awful lot of things when mom was drinking just to try to hold things together. There was just no way that I would "fail" a second time at not having kept the family together, When I was about 11 years old (Ste-Rose, 1963) Dad had taken me out for a drive. I was honoured, because he would sometimes confide in me. On this particular day, off we went for a drive in his 1964 Chrysler - cars always came out the September preceding the model year in those days. We pulled out of the long driveway, and he told me that it wasn't working out between him and mom, and that he was leaving. He also told me that he trusted me to be the "man of the house", and told me he knew I would take care of things very well. Besides, he said, I could always get a hold of him by phone if I had to, Well, let me tell you that this was a dream come true for me.... my chance to show him how well I would do. I really believed I would make him proud of me. I really took this to heart.

Three years before, during an earlier separation, we all had ended up being split up amongst relatives. Steve went to Vener, I went to Sudbury; Philip to Gatineau, Lynda and Ann to Gatineau also, but to a convent in Ste Rose de Lima. I think Karen also went to Gatineau So, I always thought that I had failed at keeping us all together.

I made a lot of mistakes too many to remember. And it seemed that at least to me, nothing I ever did was enough to show people that I had something going for me. Sure, a lot of people were very supportive, and I have very fond memories of a number of them. But, deep inside me, I always felt that I was a fraud. I hated myself, hated so many of the things that I had done. I hated what I had become. I hated the lies, and the biggest lie of all was me.

One of my biggest mistakes was a promise I had made to myself when I was about 12 years old - That I would never, ever become like mom, I promised myself that I would never treat people the way I felt she was treating me. That if I ever had a chance, "I'd show them all"!! Boy did I ever!

This shouldn't be all about doom and gloom; after all, there really were a number of good memories like my very first "real" hockey gloves. Mom bought them for me in Ste-Rose, and the trip to Wildwood, NJ with Yolande, seeing "The Shaggy Dog" with Granddad, my first bicycle. Playing hockey, and winning the MVP award. Boy Scouts, Jason. Having Dad visit me at the Changing of The Guard in Ottawa, Hearing Ann laugh (She laughed with her heart). And there are many others. Lynda has been there so many times for me which reminds me of how close we really were for so long. I used to call her "Ma Pouchinette" and, in my sobriety I don't think I could ever really let her know how much she has meant to me!

Sobriety has had its funny quirks. Dad and I were drinking buddies for so long. Seems we really drifted apart a few years ago. Steve and I had our moments also, but that too seems to have changed.

I've been away from the family for most of my life now. When I had a chance to visit in 1995, I began to realize just how much I've missed. I've missed my own son's growing up years. I've missed seeing Lynda, Ann, Steve, Karen and Yanic. I haven't seen Karen since about 1987. I haven't been there to see Lynn's, Ann's, Karen's or Steve's kids at all. I haven't ever really had much of a chance to spend any time at all with Yanic... ever! I've kept in touch, but barely. I think of all of them every day. And selfishly perhaps, I think of what I've missed.

I'm 46 years old now, and I often think about where this is all leading to. I think that most people wish to leave some sort of legacy behind when their time is up. Frankly, I'm incredibly disappointed with myself. My legacy is something else - failed relationships, failed careers, pathetic finances, and the future right now is not very optimistic. I have such a god-damned long ways to go. The good news in all of this is that I haven't given up on myself, and I'm sober. Oh, and the anger? Yes, there's still tons of it there. And I have to deal with it. There are memories that come back as I write this. So many, that the reality is that it would be almost impossible to list them all. It would certainly be difficult to express what those memories would all mean to me. I guess I can readily admit to this today - that I'm still searching somehow for home. I'm still struggling with trying to figure out where I belong; where I fit in! Lately, I've begun to realize more and more that there are people who love me. The hardest thing for me is to find love for myself And, I don't think I've found it in myself yet, to forgive myself for my past.

I've never been very good at taking stock of myself. I've avoided many things in my life, simply because I've found it very unpleasant to take a good hard look at myself. I think it has a lot to do with not liking what I see.

One of the very first AA meetings I attended was very symbolic and meaningful for me. I had just finished listening to a woman saying that she had been sober for about 8 years, and that her life sucked. She didn't trust anyone, and everyone was an asshole. She was angry about how her parents had screwed up her life. I remember thinking to myself that I didn't want to sober up to be like her. After she had finished speaking, this guy named Ed spoke. What he said made an incredible difference to me. He said to this woman that he was sad for her; sad that she had been so screwed up by her family. Then he said: "Shame on my parents for making me this way; Shame on me for not changing". I guess I need to remind myself very often about this. A Few Notes about Phil:

I think I had a chance to know Philip better than most. He first came to live with me in Windsor, Ontario in 1976. I wanted to help him; a few years later (1980), when I lived in Bathurst, New Brunswick I took him in with me again, and again in Gatineau, in 1987 he again came to stay with me. Each time, I wanted to help him yet somehow each time, it went wrong.

I've looked into a number of things in recent years - one of them being "Foetal Alcohol Syndrome". Suffice it to say, that all of us had concerns about Phil while he struggled in school. I think we all felt that the system had somehow screwed him up. Things like "new math", "phonics", and whatever other changes were taking place in the educational system of the times. I think that if Phil were alive today, he would likely be diagnosed with FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome). Phil was really good person deep down. I don't think he ever really was given much of a chance. I always will believe that he was kind and generous. I am convinced that he experienced many of the same feelings I've had. Most particularly, I'm convinced that he never thought very well of himself. I think that much like myself, he needed to be validated any chance he had. He desperately needed for others to let him know he was a good person. Most of all, he missed mom incredibly. I don't think he ever got over her death.

I guess I have a very deep sadness when I think of Philip. The fact is that I believe I let him down. Maybe this is a way I can let him know how sorry I am.

Cyril

Jan. 29, 1967

Dear Daddy,

Hi! I haven't seen you for a long time, how you?

I have been a good boy lately and so has Steve. Karen and Ann have been good girls, and we all try hard to listen to Lynda and Cyril.

Do you have a lot of snow still? We just got some and I love to go sliding in it.

Don't forget my birthday is in 23 days. It's the 21st of February. I hope I get a model! Don't forget me.

Love Philip

Full Cycle

"Have faith: Trust that circumstances in your life will align to support you on your path. When you make a commitment, life will make a commitment back. "
- (From Yoga Journal)

One never knows just how life materializes and reality remains, some things are beyond our control.

Although the past was out of Cyril's hands, it remained within his reach nourishing his future in a life of challenge. It was difficult to tell his smile from that of the veil that protected his heart, like a band-aid patted over a sore showing signs of defeat. He hid behind this invisible veil holding a secret, sacred within his heart, until the end. Cyril believed the veil over his heart was impenetrable. Life had taken its toll in the midst of his hurt, struggles, and disappointments yet; love had a balm for his wounds.

Miraculously, Cyril cultivated inner peace through a journey lasting years. He reached above his personal "mountains", up to the "summits" overcoming some of the most difficult challenges. Cyril, true to himself, lived fully within a difficult journey from what he "once was" to what he "had become". He never ceased working hard at trying to be a better person.

Fred's unconditional loyal love made us want to hold on to him a little tighter. A dog does not judge nor does he care about your success or failures; all a dog wants is to love you and to "be-loved".

Cyril's devotion to Fred gave us the strength to rise above the obstacles. That same love became contagious, spreading among the public. Fred continued to bask in the love we had for Cyril. As a result, his love lives on.

You never know what to expect until you lose someone. The dreadful growing silence in the midst of pain is bound to happen, sooner or later. The silence of Lucifer's wings, honoring those who have vanished (that immortal, sacred part of grieving) had me worshipping at its' feet. I have known comfort and forgiveness in the slow broken-sadness of sorrow within the scars of anger and regret.

My soul eroded into dust and rubble before Cyril's death charted my journey into the dungeons of childhood. Memories rustling like falling leaves in the wind.

Cyril's death left a tormenting silence so; I burned my pain, like fuel for a journey through the darkest moments wearing a lonesome "suit-of-grief", woven of memories of those I have lost.

I have wrestled with grief. Grieving taught me another side of love. Grieving also taught me that unfinished sorrow resides within. In the midst of those soul-crushing losses, it has molded me into who I am, so I hold grief close to my heart as a mother would comfort her weeping child.

To the “child within” that never quite understood, forgiveness occurs in the heart. I accept: grieving has no expiration date, memories sustain us, and life is the other side of despair.

*“I am the master of my fate
I am the captain of my soul”
-Invictus*

Three years and eight precious months went by after Cyril’s fatality leaving us with the heart of a dog to cherish. Fred was as warm and as constant as daylight. He came to us for a very special reason: to teach us about unconditional love.

I bled tears...tears of sorrow... over Fred, who died on June 29, 2013.

Fred was more than my brother’s dog! He was of the purest nature, “*a special angel*”, a messenger of a different variety. He is now running about freely beside Cyril in a place called, “Heaven”. Occasionally, he leaps into my dreams to comfort me.

The goodness this dog brought to people’s lives makes me deem he has the potential to an afterlife just as any human; after all, *Fred IS “soul”!*

Mongolians’ believe that a dog reincarnates as a human. I also believe the same.

There were no snow-covered mountains facing Tibet... nor did we recite the Dharma. Out of respect, we did the next best thing... and buried him on the farm reciting a prayer.

With a warm embrace, we bid Fred farewell...until we meet again in another life!

Acknowledgements

To my dear brother Cyril, I wrote this for you. I had not realized this journey would take so long. Thank you for the inspiration.

A huge debt of gratitude to Max Harrold, Melanie Pellerin, Frank Palumbo, Christianne Hendershott, Stephanie Walker, Daniel Guiomar, and Via-Rail.

To Alain Trudeau, my appreciation is beyond expression. Thank you for your guidance throughout and for creating my website lyndaroy.webs.com.

I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of my belated translator André Trudeau (Alain Trudeau's uncle). Unfortunately, his work remains partially finished.

To graphic designer, Hélène Carrière my heartfelt acknowledgement for the cover page contribution.

Amély Trudeau, thank you for the Facebook page.

Sheila McDonald, thank you for your emails, phone calls and countless hours of moral support.

To artist Mark Tumber thank you for the portrait of Mike and Sheila.

To my nephew, Jason: Thank you for some of those photographs.

To some very special friends: Lynne Hylands, Sue Pelland, Monique Carrière, thanks for your suggestions and tireless loyalty.

To Pierrette Gervais, Judith Veillette, Tommy Diktakis, Veronique Plouffe, Kim Hogan, Mario Landa, Nicole Brosseau, Yolande Grégoire, Aude Lemer, Rubin Varela, and Claude Somian, special thanks for your words of encouragement.

To those I have never met, yet think of fondly: Mike McDonald, Bill Sharp, Rev Macluskie, Tom Lawrence, Lucy Casmey, Bob Larocque, Brendan Fraser, John Martzouco, Rachael McDonald Lund, Nancy Hachem, Nancy McDonald, Linda-Nancy Colizza, and Suzanne Roy.

To my spouse (Claude), son (Eric) and sisters (Ann, Karen, and Yanic) thank you for the quiet time needed to disappear into the pages. I could never have done this without your love.

For those who know or have known alcoholism, drug abuse, and poverty, may you find peace. You are not alone in your struggles. Thank you for challenging my assumptions and thinking.

To the animal lovers who offered support in Fred's rescue – Thank you for understanding.

And to those I have failed to mention, I beg your forgiveness.

Selected Citations

Dedication page (French original version)

“Ceux qu’on aime, on ne les juge pas” – Jean-Paul Sartre

Translation (meaning): We do not judge the people we love.

Summary on Jean-Paul Sartre:

Jean-Paul Sartre (June 21, 1905 – April 15, 1980). Born and died in Paris, France. Sartre was a biographer, philosopher, screenwriter, playwright, novelist, political activist, and literary critic. He was also a revolutionary intellectual and advocate of existentialism who supported leftist causes in France and other countries. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote "Being and Nothingness" in 1943, among other books. He turned down the Nobel Prize in 1964. His main topic in "Being and Nothingness" concerned the existence of free will.

Christophe Hilmoine, “Citation du jour“, *Citation du Jour* v3.69.0 © 2010-2015, <http://www.citation-du-jour.fr/citations-jean-paul-sartre-777.html>

"Jean-Paul Sartre - Biographical". *Nobelprize.org. Nobel Media AB 2013. Web. 21 Jun 2014*, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1964/sartre-bio.html

“Jean-Paul Sarte”, *Wikipedia.org*, 20 June 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Paul_Sartre

Introduction Page (English original version)

“When you can tell the story and it doesn’t bring up any pain. You know it is healed” – Iyanla Vanzant

Summary of Rev. Vanzant

Rev. Dr. Iyanla Vanzant (born in Brooklyn, New York on September 13, 1953) is an author, spiritual teacher, a New Thought minister, inspirational American speaker, and television personality. Her birth name is Rhonda Eva Harris. She took on the name of “Iyanla” (meaning “great mother”) when she was ordained as a priestess in the Yoruba tradition. These are religious and spiritual concepts and practices of Southwestern Nigeria and adjoining parts of Benin and Togo.

“Iyanla Vanzant Biography”, *IMDb.com, Inc.*, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0889395/bio>

“Iyanla Vanzant”, *Wikipedia.org*, 1 June 2014., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iyanla_Vanzant

Cyril- (English original version)

“Truth is stranger than fiction”-Mark Twain

Meaning of citation - Sometimes what actually happens is more bizarre than anything one might imagine.

Summary of Mark Twain

Samuel Langhorne Clemens - pen name Mark Twain (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910). Born in Florida, Missouri and died in Redding, Connecticut. Nineteenth-century pioneer writer best known for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), often referred to as the “Great American Novel” and *The Prince and the Pauper*. He was also a journalist, inventor, lecturer, riverboat pilot and entrepreneur.

“Mark Twain Quotes Quotable Quote” 2014 *Goodreads Inc.*, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/4650-truth-is-stranger-than-fiction-but-it-is-because-fiction>

Maria Popova, “From Mark Twain to Ray Bradbury, *Iconic Writers on Truth vs. Fiction*”, *Brain Pickings*, <http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2012/01/27/famous-authors-on-truth-vs-fiction/>

“Mark Twain”, *Wikipedia.org*, 9 June 2014. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Twain

Cyril- (English original version)

“they were polished opals in a pewter world”- Alexandra Franzen

Meaning of citation - They were “awesome” people.

Summary on Alexandra Franzen

Alex owns a copywriting/communication consultancy firm Alexandra Franzen Inc. She gives writing workshops and has a blog.

Alexandra Franzen, “*50 Ways To Say Your Awesome*” (*Source Books*), <http://www.alexandrafranz.com/50-ways/>

Cyril's home – “Cowboy Country” (English original version)

“Follow your bliss”- Joseph John Campbell

Joseph Campbell's most quoted citations “follow your bliss”. He lived by the mantra and saw it as a guide to living the life journey we were meant to have.

Summary of Joseph Campbell

“Joseph John Campbell (March 26, 1904 – October 30, 1987) was an American mythologist, writer and lecturer, best known for his work in comparative mythology and comparative religion. His work is vast, covering many aspects of the human experience. His philosophy is often summarized by his phrase: "Follow your bliss."

“The Power of Myth (1987) Joseph Campbell (with Bill Moyers)”, *Butler-Bowdon.com* , <http://www.butler-bowdon.com/powermyth>

Joseph Campbell, *Wikipedia.org*, 19 June 2014,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Campbell#.22Follow_your_bliss.22

Fred - (English original version)

“In life the firmest friend / The first to welcome, foremost to defend / Whose honest heart is still his master's own / Who labors, fights, lives, breathes for him alone” — Lord Byron, from an epitaph on the tombstone of a dog

The words are from the poem "Inscription on the Monument to a Newfoundland Dog" by the British poet Lord Byron, written in 1808 in honor of his dog, "Boatswain", who died of rabies.

Summary of Lord Byron

George Gordon Byron (January 1788 – 19 April 1824). Born in London, England and died in Missolonghi, Greece. He was both a British poet and politician. His most famous poems were "Don Juan", "She Walks in Beauty" and "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage". He inherited the English Barony of Byron of Rochdale at the age of 10, therefore becoming “Lord Byron” the 6th.

Poet Wars: Lord Byron, “Literary Techniques in “Epitaph to a Dog”, *Wordpress.com*, May 8, 2014 by *phantasmiccontralto*, <http://lordbyronpoetwars.wordpress.com/about/>

“Lord Byron”, *Wikipedia.org*, 18 June 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Byron,

Solitude - (English original version)

"Loneliness can be conquered only by those who can bear solitude"~ Paul Tillich

Summary of Paul Tillich

Paul Johannes Tillich (August 20, 1886 – October 22, 1965) was a German American Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian. Born in Starzeddel, in the province of Brandenburg, Germany and died in Chicago, Illinois. Tillich was ordained as a minister in the Lutheran Church in 1912. As a theologian and philosopher, he lectured at many universities, including Berlin, Dresden and Frankfurt. During World War I, he served four years as a military chaplain. His opposition to the Nazi movement led to his dismissal in 1933. Fortunately, Reinhold Niebuhr, whom he had met in Germany, offered him a position at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. Tillich became a U.S. citizen in 1940, and then took up a position at Harvard in 1954, followed by one at the University of Chicago in 1962, where he was to remain until the end of his life. He is best known for his three volumes of *Systematic* (1951, 1957 and 1963), *The Courage to Be* (1952), and *The Dynamics of Faith* (1957).

“Welcome to Quote Garden!”, *Quotegarden.com*, 37th quote listed, 28 April 2014,

<http://www.quotegarden.com/solitude.html>

“Paul Tillich”, *Wikipedia.org*, 30 May 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Tillich

“Authors Paul Tillich 1866-1965”, *Gifford Lecture Series*,

<http://www.giffordlectures.org/Author.asp?AuthorID=169>

Long Road Ahead – (English original version)

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." ~Henry David Thoreau, 1854

Summary of Henry David Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau – (July 12, 1817 – May 6, 1862) Born and died in Concord, Massachusetts. An American author, poet, philosopher, polymath, abolitionist, naturalist, tax resister, development critic, surveyor, historian, and leading transcendentalist. The citation is an extract from Thoreau’s *Walden, Where I Lived, and What I Lived For*. He believed that Nature was an outward expression of the inward spirit.

“Welcome to Quote Garden!” , *Quotegarden.com*, 5th quote listed, 28 April 2014,
<http://www.quotegarden.com/solitude.html>

“Henry David Thoreau”, *Wikipedia.org*, 18 June 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_David_Thoreau

Final Goodbye - 2009 – (English original version)

“Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” -

Information on Alcoholics Anonymous

Members of “Alcoholics Anonymous” (founded in the US) and other 12- step programs use the Serenity Prayer. The first stanza of the entire prayer as penned in 1943 by Reinhold Niebuhr, who may not be the original author. It is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. In the Serenity prayer the word “strength” is replaced with “serenity”.

Information on Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis of Assisi (Italian) - (born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone) is the patron saint of animals and the environment. Catholics and Anglicans celebrate the blessing of animals on July 16th, the day he was proclaimed a saint.

Buddy T, “The Serenity Prayer, *The Complete, Unabridged Version*” *About.com Alcoholism*, May 16, 2014,
<http://alcoholism.about.com/cs/12steps/a/aa031297.htm>

“Francis of Assisi”, *Wikipedia.org*, 19 June 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_of_Assisi

“The Path to Serenity”, *Navhind Times*, 14 February 2014, <http://www.navhindtimes.in/zest/path-serenity>

Rescue Part 1- (English original version)

“Dogs do speak, but only to those who know how to listen.” – Orhan Pamuk

Summary of Orhan Pamuk:

Ferit Orhan Pamuk, born on June 7, 1952 in Istanbul Turkey. Profession: Novelist, screenwriter, Professor of Comparative Literature and Writing (Columbia University). A recipient of the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Orhan Pamuk Site, “Biography”, <http://www.orhanpamuk.net/>

“Orhan Pamuk, My Name is Red”, *Goodreads.com*, <http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2150886-benim-ad-m-k-rm-z>

Orhan Pamuk, *Wikipedia.org*, 21 June 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orhan_Pamuk

Rescue Part II – (English original version)

"You are never given a dream without also being given the power to make it true. You may have to work for it, however." -Richard David Bach (1936 -)

Summary of Richard Bach

Richard David Bach (born June 23, 1937). American author best known for the 1970s best-seller "Jonathan Livingston Seagull and Illusions", "The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah", among others. Flying had been a hobby since he was 17. In August 2012, he was severely injured when his plane touched some power lines landing in Friday Harbor. He believes that mortality and physical limits are only appearances. Much of his writing has metamorphic implications.

Richard Bach, *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*, “2014 *Goodreads Inc*”, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/30365-illusions-the-adventures-of-a-reluctant-messiah>

“Richard Bach”, *Wikipedia.org*, 17 June 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Bach

The Train -

“Angels exist, only sometimes they do not have wings, they ride the rails” – Lynda Roy

New Beginnings – (French original version)

“Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. Love still stands when all else has fallen - Blaise Pascal”

Summary of Blaise Pascal

Blaise Pascal (19 June 1623 - 19 August 1662) Born in Clairmont-Ferrand, Auvergne. Died in Paris, France. He was a precocious French mathematician (invented the adding machine when he was 18), physicist, inventor, writer and Christian philosopher. He was a child prodigy educated by his father, a tax collector in Rouen. Pascal's earliest work was in the natural and applied sciences where he made important contributions to the study of fluids, and clarified the concepts of pressure and vacuum by generalizing the work of Evangelista Torricelli. Pascal also wrote in defense of the scientific method.

“Search Quotes”, 2014 *Searchquotes.com*,
http://www.searchquotes.com/quotation/Love_knows_no_limit_to_its_endurance_no_end_to_its_trust_no_fading_of_its_hope%3B_it_can_outlast_any/21279/

“Blaise Pascal”, *Wikipedia.org*, 1 June 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blaise_Pascal

Home – (English original version)

"Though I know I'll never lose affection / For people and things that went before / I know I'll often stop and think about them / In my life I love you more" - Song "In My Life" - The Beatles

"In My Life" is a song released in 1965 by The Beatles on the album “Rubber Soul” written mainly by John Lennon and credited to Lennon–McCartney.

“In My Life”, *Wikipedia.org*, 15 May 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_My_Life

The Letter – 1998 (English original version)

"The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen." - Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

Summary of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

“Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D. (July 8, 1926 – August 24, 2004) was a Swiss American psychiatrist, a pioneer in near-death studies and the author of the groundbreaking book *On Death and Dying* (1969), where she first discussed her theory of the five stages of grief.

In 2007 she was admitted into the American National Women's Hall of Fame. She is the recipient of twenty honorary degrees. By July 1982 she had taught, in her estimation, 125,000 students in death and dying courses in

colleges, seminaries, medical schools, hospitals, and social-work institutions. In 1970, she delivered the Ingersoll Lectures on Human Immortality at Harvard University, on the theme, On Death and Dying.”

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, “2014 Goodreads Inc”, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/202404-the-most-beautiful-people-we-have-known-are-those-who>

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *Wikipedia.org*, 7 February 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisabeth_K%C3%BCbler-Ross

“Dr Elisabeth Kübler-Ross”, *National Library of Medicine*, http://www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/physicians/biography_189.html

Full Cycle – (English original version)

"Have faith: Trust that circumstances in your life will align to support you on your path. When you make a commitment, life will make a commitment back. "- (Yoga Journal)

“Find Your Way, Taking Your Own Advice In The New Year”, *Yoga Journal*, Posted by:
Diane | January 15, 2011 4:05 PM, 6th paragraph “Have Faith”,
<http://blogs.yogajournal.com/greenlife/2011/01/find-your-way.html>

Full Cycle – (English original version)

“I am the master of my fate I am the captain of my soul” - Invictus by William Ernest Henley

Summary of William Ernest Henley

William Ernest Henley (23 August 1849 – 11 July 1903) was an English poet, editor and critic, best remembered for his 1875 Victorian poem "Invictus" published in 1888 within his first volume of poems, the “Book of Verses. It is the fourth poem in the section Life and Death. This citation is from the last two lines of the fourth verse, meaning: a person is responsible for himself, whatever happens in life. He wrote the poem as a demonstration of his resilience following the amputation of his foot due to tubercular infection. “Invictus” comes from the Latin word “Invictus” meaning: unconquerable, undefeated.

“William Ernest Henley”, *Wikipedia.org*, 8 June 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Ernest_Henley

“Invictus”, *Academy of American Poets*, <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/invictus>