Michael John Victor Shaver 1918-2001

Jack Shaver was born in Fort William (Thunder Bay) in 1918. From the age of two to the year before his ordination he lived in the manse next door to Stella Mission, Winnipeg. Stella and Sutherland Missions were part of All People's Mission, first a Methodist, and then a United Church institution in the north end of Winnipeg. Jack graduated from United College (now the University of Winnipeg) and was ordained by Manitoba Conference on July 23, 1942 (or as he used to say: 1942½). He married Dorothy Hamlet of Fort William in 1945. They have five children, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

For the first 10 years, Jack served two rural charges in Manitoba Conference (Murillo and Sidney-Austin), then seven years at Fort Garry United Church in suburban Winnipeg. It was during this period that his theological interest and skills flourished – nurtured by a small group of clergy regularly meeting to debate the writing of Tillich, Aulen, Bultmann, and Bonhoeffer.

His next placement took the Shavers to Vancouver in 1959 where Jack served 10 years as the first United Church chaplain at the University of British Columbia. His unique blend of 'God talk', affirmation of ambiguity, and commitment to even the most radical Other, made him the ideal person for the hippies, draft-resistors, anti-war advocates, and disenchanted of the 1960s.

He left the campus ministry in 1969 and spent three years on the Metropolitan Council – an inter-presbytery urban council in BC Conference. This took him back to the inner city roots of his childhood as he acted as advocate, counselor, and janitor to the young people drifting through the Vancouver hostel and crash pad scene. Jack's spent his final 10 years in the ministry on the staff of First United Church, a mission institution in downtown Vancouver. He was elected President of the BC Conference in May 1979. Throughout this period Jack found himself encountering the soul-destroying nature of institutional structures. As usual, instead of rejecting these structures as evil, he embraced them as part of our fallen world: "The institution of the church and its structures need our care if it is to serve the gospel and not itself, if it is to be a blessing and not a monster. The trouble with the boards and courts and procedures of the church is not that they exist, but that without our care, they will not be about their true business."

Jack received two honourary doctorates in recognition of his contributions to the worlds of thought and of action. Both the University of Winnipeg (1980) and the Vancouver School of Theology (1982) conveyed this award.

Since his retirement, Jack and Dorothy continued as active members of the church while indulging their interest in visiting family and exploring more distant places. They became particularly fond of travel in the far north, including extended trips to Alaska, Baffin Island, and Iqualuit.

Celebrating Jack Shaver's life
December 2, 2001
West Point Grey United Church

John Donne

Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God

Batter my heart, three-personed God, for, you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue,
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am bethrothed unto your enemy,
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Holy Sonnet XIV

From Jack:
"If justification is by grace — then it's by grace and not good management.
If it's a gift — then it's a gift and we will receive it together.

A time of greeting the family, remembering your own Jack Stories and sharing refreshments will follow this service in the church hall. There will be letters shared, an open microphone for your sharing and perhaps some family reminisces. All are welcome

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Officiating: Rev. Cheryl Black
Organist: Bill Bruneau

Service of Thanksgiving for
Jack Shaver

October 31st, 1918 - November 21st, 2001

Prelude: Bill Bruneau

Call To Worship

Opening Prayer:

All: God, creator of all life,
Help us to be present to death as a part of life,
Trusting in your goodness and great love for all of us.
We feel now the pain of parting with a loved one,
But we rejoice that we were privileged
To experience life with Jack Shaver.

One: God, searcher of all our hearts, . . our time with Jack Shaver

All: Receive our worship, God of Love, and our healing spirit into our midst. Grant to Dorothy and all who love Jack your comfort and courage. In the name of Christ we ask, Amen.

Family words of Remembrance: Fran & Jim Shaver

* **Hymn:** "Of the Father's Love Begotten" **VU # 61**

Wider Church Remembrances Marion Best

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40: 1- 8 Peter Shaver
Romans 8:18-30 JP Reimer

Vancouver Church Remembrances Bob Burrows

A Jack Reading June Lythgoe

Meditation Rev. Cheryl Black

Prayers of the People Eunice Williams
Leader: Lord, hear our prayer.
Response: **and let our cry come unto you**

* **Hymn:** "'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime" **VU # 71**

Commendation

Commissioning and Benediction

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* Indicates those who are able may stand

Celebrating Father: Family Words of Remembrance
(West Point Grey United Church, December 2, 2001)

(Jim) I don't think we had a perfect dad or anything like that. Nor can I say: I was never spanked or shouted at – but, Dad cared for us; he cared for how he treated us; and he cared for how we treated each other.

At this point in our lives we all still love him. And, we all still love each other. I think that's a real testament to the kind of parents my Dad, and my Mother were.

(Jim) Something I'll miss was his insistence that we *gather*, then pause for a blessing before mealtimes. Let's recognize that we're together; let's recognize that work went into the meal's preparation; and let's recognize that life comes from life and shouldn't be taken for granted. All worth thanking God for.

(Fran) Shaver *gatherings* are significant, whether for a prayer before the meal, or a family camping trip, or our 50th wedding anniversary event for Mum and Dad. Making them happen has always been vital to our family life. Noticing them, and making them count became even more vital as we grew up and moved away from home to start our own families.

The last full family gathering with Jack began last week at his bedside in the hospital where he took his final breath. It continued with the delivery of his body to the funeral home on Wednesday and a witnessed cremation on Friday. It culminates with this service of thanksgiving and reception we are sharing with you today. It is bleak and painful time but not destructive. In fact, it feels just right.

"The meetings are what make life meaningful.
The partings are where you find out how much it meant."

(Jim) Dad mowed the lawn with a push lawn mower (well, actually Dad and us boys took turns). It had been that way in Winnipeg too, but when the move to Vancouver came in 1959, Mom and Dad pared down their belongings to fit into a moving van container – the mower didn't make it. But, low-and-behold when they bought a house in Vancouver a push mower was found abandoned in the basement. With a little oil and some sharpening it was put to use as the family lawn mower. That same lawn mower even made the next move to their new home when Dad retired – still in use 42 years later.

People often chuckle at such things – thinking them a quaint or quirky side of Dad. Personally I think Dad's an example for the future – someone willing to embrace treading lightly as an appropriate response to the world.

(Fran) I remember many things about Father:

- his hands (my preoccupation while flying here on Tuesday last),

- his laugh (you could pick him out in a darkened movie theatre),

- his joy in "tinking" and repairing,

- the quiet pleasure and excitement he shared following a job well done, whether it be a repaired toaster knob, a mended leak in a plastic wash basin, a Christmas mobile, or a baptismal font,

- his instance on sticking to the task until it was done, right to the final cleanup.

(Fran) Celebrating Shaver-style inevitably leads to confession: the sharing of bygone misdemeanors and more serious wrongs, most often relayed during our late night *black mass events*.

And so, I must confess that even while celebrating these memories of Father, I recall using some as weapons. Certainly the last – Why can't you finish the job like Dad does? – just ask my husband Bill.

How like us. How like me.

"Just because we mess up, there is no need for us to abandon wonder and delight."

(Fran) Celebrating Shaver-style also means rejoicing in the *din*: the clamor and noise that in various ways reflects the core of who we are. Some of you came visiting to hear it, others tried to stay clear of it, yet others were caught up in it. No matter the way, all of you will have experienced the beauty and terror of it.

Ring the bells that still can ring.
Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything,
That's how the light gets in. (refrain from Leonard Cohen's *Anthem*)

You need to know – all of you here – that our collective celebration and mourning of Jack draws us all together into one completed Shaver family.

(Jim) We used to call him 'the Old Man' - 'my Old Man'. It was meant affectionately and I believe, accepted affectionately. 'The Old Lady' didn't work for Mother but 'the Old Man' worked for Dad.

Hey Old Man - we're going to miss you.

Jack Shaver's Memorial Service: 2 December 2001 at West Point Grey United Church

Today, I'm representing hundreds of people across the United Church of Canada whose lives have been influenced by Jack Shaver. For many of us, he was a "pastor theologian - at- large". Most of us were never part of the pastoral charges where he ministered and some of us rarely if ever heard him preach or preside at a worship service but we were part of his wider parish.

Our encounters were at meetings, and sometimes at the "after meetings" when we'd reflect on what it all meant. Some will remember Jack from Home Missions, Congregational Life and Work, Division of Mission in Canada, Archives, Naramata Centre and BC Conference. Others met him at a gathering in some other Conference, or a national committee or consultation where he had come to lead the body in Bible study, reflection and prayer.

There were some who sensed the profundity of what Jack was saying while they still struggled to understand or to grasp one of his insights. Once a person who attended a large gathering where Jack was speaking said he felt as though he was out on the ocean in a fog but every so often the beam from a lighthouse would reach him and he could see clearly; then within seconds it was gone again and he would settle into the fog waiting for the light to return.

There was a "reverent irreverence" about Jack that endeared him to many. His behavior at meetings was somewhat unusual. No matter what the meeting was about or where it was being held, he would sit for long periods with his eyes closed, slowly rise from his chair, pace back and forth in his stocking feet with a long scarf draped around his neck, stop to look out the window and sometimes even lie on the floor!

It was always a delight to see the amazement of those who were new to all this, express their wonder at how anyone who appeared to hang so loose to the meeting could do such powerful reflection that went right to the heart of the matter. When he closed the meeting

with prayer, the connection between his words and our experience, the offering to God of all our weaknesses and presumptions, the depth of feeling and the tone of Jack's voice took the community to a deeper place.

His loyalty to the institutional church was remarkable even though he recognized its structures could be soul-destroying. I remember the little paper he wrote on the Care of Structures where he said:
"The institution of the church and its structures need our care if it is to serve the gospel and not itself, if it is to be a blessing and not a monster. The trouble with the boards and courts and procedures of the church is not that they exist, but that without our care, they will not be about their true business."

All across the country there are clergy who during their internships were fortunate to be supervised by Jack. His insights and connections between the Biblical stories and people's lives made him a marvelous teacher. During the 1960's he and Ted Nichols came to Naramata Centre each year to engage the young adult Winter Session students in a week of Bible Study. As a result, many eyes and ears were opened to the Word. As a Board member and later as Chairman of the Naramata Board, Jack always pressed the Centre to remember it wasn't just about the people business, it was about God's business.

When the WCC Assembly took place in 1983 on the UBC campus, thousands of people from 120 countries gathered for daily worship under the yellow and white striped tent. On the platform was the plywood altar Jack had made, all be it covered with the brightly coloured cloths of Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. On that altar the Lima Liturgy was celebrated for the first time with the Archbishop of Canterbury presiding; over that altar Phillip Potter lifted up the baby girl who had been brought forward by her Zimbabwean mother as an act of thanksgiving for the gift of life; and long after the resolutions and debates had been forgotten, people remembered the worship: worship conducted on and around the plywood altar that Jack had crafted.

He was a craftsman with both wood and words. Through the Lenten booklet entitled "By

Such Stripes Are We Healed" his carefully crafted prayers reached many who never met him. Those who did meet him will have some words or phrases of his that they will always remember. The ones I remember are "The helping hand strikes again"; "It's God's righteousness, not a righteousness of our own"; "You don't explain a metaphor, it either goes bang or it doesn't" and "Sin abounds but grace abounds more!"

On behalf of the members of his wider parish, I offer thanks to God for Jack Shaver, our beloved teacher, mentor, pastor, friend and companion on the Way.

Marion Best Naramata B.C.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF JACK SHAVER

(October 31, 1918 - November 21, 2001)

It has become fashionable in recent years for sportwriters to describe certain team players as "impact" players. When they are on the ice or in the game, everyone else is affected by their energy, style, performance and even the aura that surrounds them.
The life and ministry of Jack Shaver cannot be described without thinking about the remarkable impact he had on all who were near him.

I want to illustrate his impact on the Christian community locally with a few snapshots that capture some of his remarkable gifts.

UBC Campus Ministry

For more than a decade Jack lived out his ministry at UBC and he could be seen supporting a lone student one moment and challenging an SCM Study Group the next. The sixties were years of great upheaval for students, faculty, the churches and the social fabric of our communities. Jack never pretended to have all the answers, but there were a lot of students and faculty who turned to him in their searching, and found a friend who would hear them out and, more times than not, find a Word that helped them through a tough time. He was "there" for the churched and the unchurched in equal measure.

The Vancouver Inner-City Service Project

From the first Sunday afternoon meeting that launched the Inner-City Project in 1966, Jack was at the centre of the planning and oversight of what became a seven-year project. Students from a variety of disciplines came together for 4 months to learn about the challenges facing low-income people in our communities. Where possible the students developed and implemented creative programs, exposing themselves to the criticism of their colleagues and the theological critique of Jack Shaver and friends.

The Metropolitan Council

Jack was a key member of the B.C. Conference President's Commission that reviewed the urban mission challenges in the Lower Mainland. The new administrative and planning instrument that emerged

from that review was the Metropolitan Council, and Jack and Gordon Laird were called and appointed to the staff.Jack left the ambiguity of campus ministry and found himself surrounded by other ambiguities.On the one hand the structures within our communities needed to be altered but meanwhile large numbers of people were hungry and hurting. Jack believed the Church is called to the Cure of Structures and the Cure of Souls and that neither could exist on its own.He believed that whatever services were provided by church agencies should be accountable to those who received the services.At its best, the Metropolitan Council guided the Lower Mainland Presbyteries into a new era with imagination and purpose. Much of its success is attributed to Jack's unusual combination of gifts. Many church and community workers were blessed by Jack's willingness to listen and counsel. We know he didn't believe in giving advice, but how wonderful it was when he would gently say "Have you ever thought of trying this?"

FIRST UNITED CHURCH

A few days before Jack's official retirement in 1982 he was interviewed by Bob Stewart and asked to reflect on the various ministries during his 40 years as an ordained minister. He said that almost without exception he had been located where he deeply meant what he was called to do. But when it came to First United Church and his nine years there,he could only reply with words from the Shaker Carol 'tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free, 'tis a gift to come down where you ought to be'. He concluded by saying "In some broken but deeply true way, for me, First Church was a coming down where I ought to be."

A snapshot during the First Church years might show Jack, leaning against the wall, listening intently to yet another victim, scratching his head and wondering what help might be available for this person that would not be a put-down.When Jack retired from First Church there was a long line of people related both to the congregation and the mission who said: "Jack is my friend. I'm really going to miss him."

And so are we all.We will miss him because he was a faithful

servant of the church who believed that, with all its imperfections, the institutional church was still called to be about Christ's mission. We will miss Jack's sharp theological mind and his never-to-be-forgotten laugh.And we will miss him because in so many parts of the community there are people of all ages and circumstance whose voices can be heard saying "Jack was my friend. I'm really going to miss him."

Bob Borrows

Bob Burrows referred to this in his talk

FIRST THINGS FIRST
(News from First United Church)

Vol. 1, No. 6 September, 1982

INTERVIEW: JACK SHAVER AND FIRST THINGS FIRST

A few days ago I was talking to Jack and asked him if he had ever had to preach a sermon and had not been able to do any preparation. He said that on one occasion he was going to interview someone in the sermon period and the person had not turned up, so he ended up asking the questions that he had prepared, and answering them himself. It struck me that we should try something like that again, so I asked Jack if he would interview himself again and see what he could come up with. (ed.)

FIRST THINGS FIRST: On September 1st, 1942 you went to your first pastoral charge as an ordained minister. On August 31st you will retire. What do you think about as you approach the end of a forty year ministry?

JACK SHAVER: Which of my responsibilities is it fair to leave to my successor in a state of disorder? It seems I have to feel guilty about something. Right now that's the big one.

FTF: Is guilt all that you are feeling?

JACK: There is no doubt I seem to spend a lot of energy dealing with a bad conscience. But guilt is not all I feel or think about. It is occurring to me now for instance that although I have almost always dreaded everything, I have almost without exception been located where I deeply meant what I was called to do. The order of ministry can provide opportunity for intensity and depth...It can also provide opportunity for shallowness and fraud of course.

FTF: What things stand out in the forty year span?

JACK: When I hear it put that way I think of the march of the decades and their distinct characteristics. I was schooling through the 30's (including university and student summer fields; in rural parishes in the 40's (war and post-war); in the suburbs in the 50's (church extension); the U.B.C. campus in the 60's (New Left Revolution); Urban Ministry in the 70's (community organizing..empower the powerless). In each case my location was where a lot of the action took place in those decades.

FTF: Do you sense any trend or continuity over those decades?

JACK: What struck me when you asked that is how the awareness has increased that the world's dilemmas are out of hand...that they aren't capable of solution. We used to believe that we almost had the key to the human predicament on the earth. We kept finding and adding pieces of the remedy and each piece we added stayed there and the remaining remedies were within reach. It is the disintegration of that kind of hope that characterizes the forty years.

FTF: Are you saying there is no hope?

JACK: I am saying that hope is now being so severely tested that all false hope gets shown up for what it is. We are getting to the place where only God's hope can give us hope.

FTF: You've talked about decades and radical changes. Is that what stands out most?

JACK: Not really. It's people who stand out most. The people I was with when I went through all that. Mom and Dad and all the people around as I grew up. Dorothy and our Kids. Other formative relationships stand out. Thinkers, writers, friends. People we were with when new insights came, when the foundations

of our world were shaken. I think the most profound God-activity of all is when people are given to each other....when they are made members of one another. The march past of members is more moving than the march past of decades.

FTF: Can you say anything to or about First United Church and your time here with us?

JACK: I think of a line from that Shaker Carol I love so well.

'Tis a gift to be simple
'tis a gift to be free,

Right now I don't know a better definition for Salvation than the next line.

'tis a gift to come down where you ought to be.

In some broken but deeply true way, for me, First Church was a coming down where I ought to be.

REMINDER: JACK SHAVER RETIREMENT PARTY

AT

FIRST UNITED CHURCH

Friday, Sept. 10th

6:30 -- 9:30 p.m.

(Dinner provided; if you can bring a dessert call Eunice Williams, 224 7884 or Church Office, 681 8365.)

Jack's Memorial Service ..... December 2, 2001

How do you tame an enormity?

To name the many facets of Jack's being in this world
and what he meant to each of ous
requires more and less than words.
Life, as Jack insisted, is an art
- as is theology -
The art of 'suffering the question'.
Jack's sacred speech, as we all know,
- his God talk if you will was couched in body talk.
Its language framed in shrugs and groans, embraces and guffaws,
in profound utterings and bits of incoherent muttering,
in silences and sighs too deep for words.
The Word to Jack was found in flesh
in all its frailty and fragmentation
- its brokeness and blessedness -
this was the mess he loved and called his home.

This is how he once wrote about his wrestle with the Word:
"I had been out of seminary eight years when the theological revolution struck my part of the world. This was an exciting time for me and the church. ... Rejected biblical concepts like sin and salvation, good news instead of good advice, came alive. The Doctrine of the Church, the priesthood, the Sacraments and the Word came alive. ... Theological dialogue and discussion raged creatively on all sides. The groups I participated in experienced a series of transforming events. At least our preaching changed. ... Here was a redemptive community.

In the fall of 1959 I came to UBC. ... I was expecting to repeat the great events of the 50's. It began to look as though it would come off. After two years a theological dialogue was under way but it didn't quite go right. ...

By the time I had stayed through a whole student generation I found that we had some of the elements of a redemptive community. A group of students and faculty had experienced the wounds of exposure and found the grace to bear one another, at profounder depths than I had ever experienced. Wondrous as this was I found I could hardly call this community 100%redemptive, the inimacy we experienced was life-givinig but it remained profoundly ambiguous. It was not free of destructive elements.

Its members ate one another as well as blessed one another. I looked back with nostalgia to the student community I had known in the 50's. ...

For one wild short period I found myself longing for less intimacy – for the innocent fun-times of not knowing what was really going on with people. At this time I got involved with two friends my own age – a brother and sister – at their father's funeral. ... I had long known how ambigous the relationship with this parent had been. ... After the funeral I met with these two for a fantastic couple of hours. They were in torment because they had endured a funeral at which the ministry had been all sweetness and light. By ignoring the reality of the situation the church had cut off any ministry to these people ... the church had nothing to say to people who desperately needed a redemptive word and were hopefully looking to the church for it.

This experience was timely for me. Mess (as it was out there) or not, I knew I belonged in it rather than out of it. The peace of not knowing – was not the peace of the Gospel. As a result of all this I am toying with several descriptive epigrams that I find risky but irresistable. Risky because they are prone to distortion ... but irresistable because what seeks expression can be expressed only in a mode that risks distortion.

About the community I have known lately I want to say, *'It's either redemptive or it's real'* – or perhaps a truer statement is the less extreme – *'when a community becomes real, it's both redemptive and destructive at the same time'.*
About the human relationships I have known, I want to say *'They are either dead or they are murder'* – or perhaps a truer statement is the less extreme – *'When human relationships come alive they include murder'.*

I experience the human situation as much more radically ambigous than ever before. It's a wilderness when you get to the real thing. Self-knowledge and other-people-knowledge, when you abandon the pretend world are a wilderness. .. I don't find myself wishing that I didn't know it was a wilderness. If that's how it is, it's great to know it. It's home. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. ...

For the wilderness, if we are participants in it and not just observers of it, mostly silence is appropriate.

If justification is by grace - then it's by grace and not good management.
If it's a gift - then it's a gift and we will receive it together"

So be it...

June Lythgoe

A Jack Shaver Prayer

The original was written by Jack for the memorial service for Dwight Williams in October, 1990.

Almighty God, receive this our offering of this our memorial.

Receive our confusion of sorrow and relief.
Let them flow forth unto you
until our sorrow is touched with Godly sorrow,
and our relief rests on trust in your goodness.

Lord, hear our prayer
.... and let our cry come unto you....

Receive our thanks and praise!
especially our gratitude for Jack.
Let our grateful memory flow out to you
until our gratitude swells
from a reckoning of our blessings against our complaints
unto our embracing the gift of life
whatever it contains.

Lord, hear our prayer
.... and let our cry come unto you...

Receive our faith.
Let it flow out to you - right into the shadow of death,
right through that great fear that shakes us
when we are on the verge of trusting in your LOVE alone.

Lord, hear our prayer
.... and let our cry come unto you...

Receive the broken offering
of our care of one another -
and through the miracle of the Word make flesh
transform that care and return it unto us
as the bread of eternal life

Lord, hear our prayer,
...and let our cry come unto you...

Now as our Saviour has taught us we pray...

Comments regarding Jack Shaver
December 1, 2001
Bill Reimer

I knew Jack before I knew his daughter. In fact, Fran tells the story how she was rather bewildered when I first started courting her. She kept wondering why I would come around the house – then spend time with her rather than talk theology with Jack.

Jack consistently had words that legitimized what I was feeling. When I found myself disenchanted with many of the causes being championed on the UBC campus, it was through our discussions than I understood how important ambivalence was – that it was not a sign of lack of courage, but indeed in the climate, required another type of courage. I discovered later that for him, discussions about ambivalence, identity, and faith, were not academic (as they so often were in university life) but were central to his understanding of the human condition and his place in it.

What made this remarkable, and unusual, was the way in which he shared in our dilemmas, was able to give us the space to wrestle with our demons, and by doing so, convey the message that the struggle was a worthy one. Perhaps it was his sharing in the struggle that gave his words their power.

I found those early seminars and discussions both challenging and exciting. Since so many of my encounters with Jack were around the large questions of life, and being, faith, and purpose, I mistakenly felt that to keep the conversation growing I had to bring a big question to keep his interest. Luckily, I soon found that there were many more ways to share with him than through a seminar, a personal crisis, or theological dilemma.

I'm extremely grateful that I have come to share not only his words and insights, but his joy – in forest walks, new lives, self-discovery, and indeed, his family. I remember with a smile our camping trip up Black Tusk, and his enjoyment how Samwise, our dog, gradually moved in, then took over the tent. I cherish the memory of our cross-Canada trip when Jack, Dorothy, Fran, J.P., and I traveled the 6500 km from Montreal to Vancouver in our Volkswagen Van. We were a captive audience for Jack's stories about his own trips from the old family mill near Odessa, to Catherine's Cove in northern Ontario, to his first ministry in Ontario and Manitoba, his boyhood memories of North Winnipeg and Stella Mission, his friends and new parish at Fort Garry United and Byng place, his travels in the Qu'appele Valley, in Saskatchewan, through Edmonton, Jasper, and with Wilma at Sicamous. All the way across the country we were given the best history lesson ever.

As J.P. told me last year, we MUST live to create these memories, for it seems the memories are what sustain us. Jack has provided enough to sustain many lives.

It's not lost on me, how the memories and stories that keep us together now, are far removed from the existentialism that brought Jack and I together so long ago. Nor is it lost on me, that it was my son who brought it to my attention.

I have been greatly blessed by the creation of memories and stories with Jack. For me, sharing them with him has been a delight and an inspiration. I will miss being able to do so in the future.

I was attempting to write down what Jack's friendship meant to me, grappling with questions such as "How had his life touched mine?", "What did he bring forth in me?", and "What parts of myself did he help me realize?". I felt a growing sense of gratitude and wanted to thank him directly. The result is the following letter:

Dear Jack,

I met you about 25 years ago on a visit to Vancouver with your son, John. You seemed gruff and blunt at first. However, I quickly felt, at some deep level, that you cared about me, and that caring was not at all unusual for you. You listened and considered my opinions, and I felt heard and respected. I mattered enough for you to share your opinions and thoughts and you considered mine, so our interchanges were rich, even though they might occur months apart, and few words were exchanged. I remember your careful, measured words; how each one had weight and none were wasted.

I remember your comfort with yourself. You were at ease with who you were; with you, I also felt at ease being myself. But this never meant that you settled for easy answers, or the comfortable way. When I'd ask you some question that was vexing me, some answer I was grappling with, you never handed me platitudes or placebos. When the question was one that still troubled you, you said so. And that was calming, for if you also could struggle with issues, then I felt o.k. still struggling with them also. This fed a great hunger in me, to find someone who was not afraid of the grappling and the searching. You were a great companion on the trek.

With you, I was able to develop a relationship like the one I was just starting with my father when he died. We were beginning to relate as two men, as peers, instead of just as father/son. That relationship was cut short, but my friendship with you allowed me to have a good taste of what it might have been like had my father lived.

Like my father, you were interested in everything. We could talk history, philosophy, theology, farming, woodwork, cabbages and kings. You deeply loved life, and never stopped exploring it. You helped me to realize the sometimes terrible beauty in all that life offers, and that to live passionately, you have to take ALL and embrace it, for it is all divine. Jack, you were one of my local heroes; an example not with just words, but simply by how you lived and loved your life.

Because of you, I try to live by these precepts:
My life is perfect as it is; there has not been a single superfluous minute, not a single wasted word.
There is much I do not understand, but I can only trust, that in the Great Mystery, I play my part, and all is well.

Thanks, Jack, and may we meet again.

Paul M.

Dec 2, 2001