

Tragedy in Montréal

Bill Reimer
September 8, 2012

Hi Samantha,

I remember on our cross-Canada trip that you mentioned not knowing about your mother's involvement with the tragic death of 14 women at the École Polyvalent in Montréal on December 6, 1989. This letter will try to fill you in a bit on this difficult period in her life.

On that December 6th, a young man entered the École with a rifle and began shooting people. Before he killed himself, he had killed 14 women. One of those women was Geneviève Bergeron – a classmate of Daegan during her years at FACE school.

It wasn't until December 8th that the names of the victims were published. As soon as we found out that Geneviève was among them, JP tried to phone Daegan. She was at Brock University in St Catharines Ontario (nearby Niagara Falls where we visited). She was an undergraduate student there, completing her BA Degree. JP couldn't get through to her, so I phoned later in the day and finally was able to speak to her. Needless to say, she was very upset.

Fran was in Thunder Bay visiting your Great Grandmother Hamlet with Dorothy and Jim. I tried to call her, but could only leave a message. Poor Daegan was all alone and far away so was feeling very bad. She called a number of times just to talk.

They held a visitation for Geneviève at the Université de Montréal on the 9th (Saturday). Daegan was still in St Catharines so JP went on her behalf. He met a number of friends from FACE there – along with Geneviève's parents. He told them that Daegan was in St Catharines and sent her condolences.

After attending a memorial service at Brock on Sunday, Daegan said she found some welcome support from people there – especially when they discovered she knew Geneviève. In addition, she finally got in touch with Fran and Jack called Daegan to talk as well. We suggested that Daegan might want to come home early since she was so upset. This meant that she would miss some of her exams, but we felt that it would be possible to arrange something afterward.

Daegan came home early on Monday and we went into town on Tuesday to contact some of her FACE friends. She and JP worked on a calendar for my parents' Christmas present. I was very pleased to see how much JP and Daegan supported each other as they went through old photos and shared memories along the way.

Fran got home from Thunder Bay on Wednesday (Dec 13th) and then Daegan and JP went to visit Geneviève's mother at her home and deliver a card that Daegan had made. They were invited for tea but we were in a rush and couldn't stay too long.

The FACE Christmas concert was at St. Ange in Lachine on the 17th. It was especially poignant since Geneviève was a central member of the choirs. Her parents were there as well as many of the old FACE

students. It was a lovely time since Daegan was able to meet her friends there. We went back to Linda Aston's place for an after-concert party.

Much later, the students from Geneviève's choir asked the FACE choirmaster, Mr. Edwards, to help them put on a special memorial concert by singing Mozart's *Requiem*. At first he thought it would be too emotional for them, but they insisted and he arranged for the necessary soloists and orchestra to accompany the choir. It was a wonderful legacy of the training they had all done together over the years. JP was able to participate in this event. He had sung the Requiem with the other students when he attended FACE. Unfortunately, Daegan could not participate since she had returned to St Catharines to go back to school.

I expect that Daegan could fill you in on many other details of this difficult period – but you will have to be lucky to find a time when she wants to talk about it with you.

Love,
Bill