

From Betty Ponder, Jan 1996, following Jonathan's death in August 1995. Italics are Warren's.

Dear Warren and Patty,

I've listened to Jonathan's memorial service tape several times now, and held the precious remembrances of his creativity, and I suppose all of this made me remember my own experiences (*her son Gregory died May 9, 1973*), to sift and sort and relive what I bury away in my heart. And I suppose there is some sorrow for what I see as my own inability to cope well. Murray had left in August after falling hopelessly in love with a young girl called Heather only two years older than Linda. He himself said he never knew why. It happened! Despite marriage counseling and all the usual efforts at self-examination and self-recriminations, our twenty-one-year-old marriage ended in divorce in September. Gregory was 12 then. He tried desperately to maintain some contact with his father, but Murray's way of coping was to keep his distance, so this child became more wistful with waiting by the window.

Finally spring came and Murray agreed to include Gregory in a fishing trip planned with one of his cronies, called Bill. It was a Wednesday afternoon trip so they left while I was still at work. It was a warm day in May, though the ice still rimmed the lake where they launched the canoe. I came home from work, changed into shorts and proceeded to thin the raspberry canes. Linda was here, and Jennifer too....then the phone call came. It was Murray to say that he'd lost Gregory. And so the whole thing ended, and the whole thing began, the screaming, loneliness, the unreality. They had not put a life jacket on Gregory (*even though bad weather had been predicted*). When the canoe turned over, Murray tried to swim to shore with Gregory, while the other man, Bill, stayed with the canoe and pushed it to land. The boy had said only "Dad!" as he slipped away in the freezing water, as Murray crawled onto the shore. So I 'held' him through a couple of days and nights, the sand still in his pant cuffs, till they found the body. Heather arrived to help Murray start again. During the waiting period the house was full of friends and caring people. The body was cremated, and Bill made a bronze cross to mark the grave. The little Anglican church beside the house gave us a burial place. We had no funeral as such, or memorial service. I was absolutely incapable of organizing it, and the idea of sharing a memorial service with Heather was more than I could imagine. I couldn't face it.

The two girls and Murray and I walked across the lawn with the ashes to the little grave yard next to the church and we dug the place and buried him with his favorite things, and Murray kissed me goodbye one last time and was gone. The only memorial was the morning sun and the many-colored warblers in the tall trees. I wish I could have done more but I couldn't. I remember the cold chill of finality and the seeping loneliness as my life changed. Old friends who were couples drifted away and I found that often people had difficulty talking to me because they didn't know what to say.

But I had an interesting job that provided an anchor in a sane world, and I had girls who still needed attention, especially Jennifer. Linda was in university and was more needed than needful. My relationship with Charlie blossomed and flourished, I made new friends who were single, I turned the upstairs of the house into an apartment to finance the dwindling resources, and I got on and escaped in my own fashion. But I still am marked with feelings of inadequacy. Gregory deserved more, more time, more family love and maybe a different father.

So time slides by. Murray married Heather and their son is now in university. Murray spends his time making maple syrup for the farmers market and has little time for his grandchildren. He sees them

once a year at Christmas for a few hours. He misses much not knowing them. As always, he just doesn't have time.

Jonathan had much love in his life and gave much in return, and he will be remembered with joy, and be admired for his talents and his courage and his humanness. I wish I had had a chance to know him better. But he feels strangely close too, now that he is gone in one form. I'll send the remembrances along to Jennifer now that everyone here has had a chance to spend time with them.

Catherine's wedding sounds as though it was a fine affair. I do hope that she and Ben will be able to attend the family reunion in July.

We had a busy Christmas with lots of grandchildren about. They range in age from a few months, on Charlie's side, to Jason, who will be 14 in a week's time. You'll get to meet them in July, at least the ones on my side of the family.

We have been skiing quite a bit though some time has been lost due to temperatures which were dangerously cold. I see by the news that you've had your share of that kind of weather too. We went to South Carolina before Christmas to play golf, and Doug and Ruth joined us from Florida. I hadn't seen them for about four years, so it was great fun. That surely is an impressive RV they are enjoying. They plan to spend a couple of months exploring the east coast on their way up to the reunion here. And at the end of next week we are going to Arizona to see Evelyn and see a bit of the country too. Maybe we can take her away on a small trip to give her a break. Then we'll be back in Fredericton just in time for Charlie to receive a special engineering award which he isn't too keen on receiving since he has to purchase a tux and make an acceptance speech.

In March, we'll take the kids skiing in Maine during some of their school break, then we'll go off to Utah and Wyoming for a couple of weeks of more skiing. It's a strange life when all that lies ahead is play, years of play. Obviously, I need projects and the family reunion is going to provide a grand one.

I'll close now. Love to all—as always, Betty (and Charlie too)