

SPRING: Budding Light

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SEASONS OF LIFE

The Medicine Wheel, a symbol of peaceful interaction and connection among all living beings on Earth, lends itself to limitless interpretations and teachings. In Medicine Wheel tradition, time and space are circular, Sacred and Life are one. All power comes from Creator at the center of the unbroken circle. As days and seasons mark changes of time, there is an endless connection to past, present, and future. Four directions reach to embrace all people of Mother Earth, nurtured and integrated by healing energy. Dimensions of body, mind, heart, and spirit balance the journey of creation and the seasons of life.

SPRING: Budding Light - Season of Willingness and Wonder

In the beginning, in the morning of our life, our physical BODY is formed from a spark of Energy, symbolized by the Sun. This is the time of youth, of planting and seeding. Children are naturally spontaneous, enthusiastic, and creative as they awaken to their individual and unique potential. The gifts of youth are innocence and playfulness.

The East is the season of creation. The eagle, spirit animal of the East, represents clarity and vision. The Sun rises and a new day begins. The eagle flies high in the sky close to Creator and sees a wide perspective. The Sun warms the earth and gives energy to creation. East is the beginning of all new life as people embrace their mission of love and service to each other.



Spring is a time of unlimited potential. The evolution of diversity and power of human achievements includes...

explorers who search and discover new lands,
doctors who learn to heal the human body and spirit,
astronomers who explore the reaches of the universe,
writers and poets who create language to record our history and deepest feelings,
artists and musicians who develop new expressions of beauty and wonder,
farmers and ranchers who cultivate crops and raise animals to feed the world,
scientists who discover new and exciting inventions,
parents and teachers who nurture and challenge bright minds to greater achievements,
leaders who guide their countries and communities in peace and prosperity,
and the many workers who provide food, shelter, utilities, communication, and
transportation to our growing population.

The complex tapestry of our universal culture reflects unlimited potential. And yet the eagle circling today, as it has for every generation of new birth, also sees shadows in the light of day. Unfortunately, disease, greed, violence, and oppression provide obstacles that impede our natural drives for production, creativity, and community.



March 30: Easter Sunday

Easter Sunday is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring Equinox.

Take my hand, my child
And I will show you the morning sun.
I will teach you all that I know
And you will share with me the secrets of the heart.
It may not be a fair exchange,
but it is all that I have to offer.

(from a Thought Factory card, circa 1973)

My darling Cara,

Happy spring and happy Easter, wherever you are!

2005: This morning was a celebration of baptism, to welcome a child into the life of faith chosen by his parents. For Christians, Easter is the celebration of Resurrection, victory over death and sin.

“And so it begins...” The pastor gave an inspiring talk about new beginnings, the compelling and powerful adventure of a faith journey. He spoke of faith having the ability to change our actions. Just as relationships develop gradually over time spent together, we need patience to achieve our common goals. Baptism is an invitation to a new way of living and faith is the acceptance of that invitation.

The gift of water, symbolic of life, brings the promise of peace and justice for all. Yet we are also called to work towards those goals. A gentleman from the congregation spoke about his volunteerism with Habitat for Humanity, a special mission that helps provide ownership to families who could not otherwise afford their own home.

Following the service, assembled relatives and friends gathered for a lovely lunch. The various shapes and sizes of aunties and grandmas present reminded me once again of the subtle influence of genetics and I wondered if or how long the blissful new mom would remain petite.

March 31: Senate Sub-committee on Solicitation Laws

2011: The body of **Kerry Takkiruq**, age 19, mother of a son, was found on Riverside Golf Course in Edmonton. She had moved from Nunavut a few years earlier.

2017: **Sara Crane**, age 21, died from a stab wound after an altercation with a female friend in Edmonton. The other woman was charged with second-degree murder.

Hi sweetie,

2005: Today was a Cara day of tribute to you. The Senate Sub-Committee on Solicitation Laws met in Edmonton and received a full afternoon of submissions. An entourage of 13 people was received in a hot, stuffy, crowded office to learn about existing programs. Hopefully they also clued in to the conditions under which many non-profit services work. From there we strolled down the block to a more comfortable meeting facility.

Six street survivors presented accounts of how being bought for sex impacted and continues to impact their lives. They also spoke of barriers they experienced and continue to face on their respective roads to recovery.

Dawn stated she never tried to kill a john although many johns had tried to kill her. Yet she is punished, after having been clean and straight for years, by the handicap of old criminal records when she seeks employment and education.

One woman spoke of the horrors she and others face in “high track” massage parlors where they are not “allowed” to use condoms. A young man spoke of extreme violence that is part of male prostitution. He described himself as a living soul in a dead body while on the street and needing an incomprehensible amount of support to recover.

Another woman spoke of the triple trauma of mental illness, addiction, and sexual exploitation. Many of my earlier campaigns championed the need for better understanding of concurrent disorders of mental illness and addiction. Now I recognize that the trauma of ongoing

exploitation is another barrier. A final person spoke of extraordinary challenges facing the transgender population.

I closed the afternoon with a prepared talk. Some of my ideas were that we need to make our communities safer for all citizens and that, as a society, we need to raise the bar of our own civilization to eliminate sexual exploitation.

A lovely young woman from Calgary, on the street since age 14, commented that your spirit lives in all survivors and now will live in the Committee members. She said few people could hope to do as much in their life as you are doing now. That beautiful massage “worker” said my talk had given her hope. She hadn’t thought previously of social norms changing over time. She commented that 20 years ago no one would have ever believed smoking would be banned in bars, and yet that had come to pass. Change is possible.

Spring is traditionally “coming alive” time, the promise of new life with Mother Earth, just as the new life of a child brings the promise of new possibilities.

April 1: Spring in Alberta

2016: April 1 - Not a joke: In Edmonton the moratorium on new body-rub licenses was lifted, allowing “businesses” offering erotic massage to open in clear contradiction to federal legislation. Concerns of exploitation were overruled by City Council who voted unanimously to provide discrete protection for buyers of sexual services.

2016: The body of **Kelsey Nicole Kramer**, age 23, mother of three, was found in a densely wooded area south-west of Edmonton. The children also lost their father in 2015. Kelsey was last seen March 19 near Drumheller and was believed heading back to Drayton Valley.

Dear Cara,

It was autumn of 1966 when I parted ways with my high school sweetheart. He was the nicest guy in the world, very mature and steady, but I was nowhere near ready to settle down or

have a serious relationship. I wonder sometimes how we might have managed had we continued to date through university. Would his mother have been able to coach me in middle-class social graces? Would I have ever felt worthy? Could we have settled into “normal” existence with dual careers and a live-in nanny for two active and academically inclined children?

Instead, a different journey beckoned me. I moved out of province, studied philosophy, lived a celibate life with a community of women, immersed myself in religious pursuits, and sought to understand the poverty and suffering of the world in order to help transform it. A worthy vision perhaps, but operational challenges persisted.

2002: The April issue of *Reader's Digest* featured Heather Forsyth, MLA from Calgary, then Solicitor General for the province of Alberta. Heather became involved in the plight of children in the sex trade after working as a volunteer with the Parent Support Association of Calgary. In June 1993, she was elected Conservative candidate for her riding and became an honorary board member with Street Teams, an outreach organization to help young people trapped in sex exploitation.

In March 1996, Heather called upon Alberta legislature to get tough on predators of children. She was invited by then Premier Ralph Klein to head a task force; a report was finished January 1997, and in June Heather sponsored an amendment to the Child Welfare Act stating that children involved in prostitution were sexually abused. The Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act was proclaimed on February 1, 1999.

As previously discussed, the legal language was later changed to more accurately reflect reality and new legislation was introduced in October 2007 named the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children. (See February 1.)

April 2: Three more charges

2002: Robert Pickton was charged with three counts of first-degree murder.

Heather Kathleen Bottomley, age 25, last seen April 2001;

Jacqueline McDonell, age 26, last seen January 16, 1999; and

Diane Rosemary Rock, age 24, last seen November 23, 2001.

Jacqueline was the 37th, **Heather** the 45th, and **Diane** the 49th of the missing women of Vancouver.

2005: Pope John Paul II died after weeks of illness.

Dear little Cara,

1974: Nothing for me ever compared to the awe and mystery of your conception. I was excited to learn I was pregnant. I paid \$3 for an early morning urine test at the free clinic. A lady said, “Yes, the results are quite positive” and asked if that was a problem. “No,” I replied, “Well, yes, but nothing I can’t handle.” And I stepped outside into the bright spring sunlight, rejoicing at the new path my life would take because of the new life within me.

I wanted to tell your father right away but it was another couple days before we met. Even in those beginning times, our relationship was somewhat tentative. Finally one evening we went for a drive and stopped and walked along the river bank. I told him as we leaned against a tree in the quiet twilight. He held me close without words and simply gazed at me with deep brown eyes full of surprise and wonder.

Chaos and I discussed marriage hypothetically – and not so hypothetically. When we were together, loving him seemed natural, but once apart, my perspective shifted and I realized how unbalanced our union was regardless of the feelings we shared.

He declared I was “the only girl he ever loved.” There was a time in earlier days he suggested we live in northern Alberta. “My parents have a cabin up there,” he said, “We could get welfare.” That was far from my vision on so many levels.

I was the first generation away from the farm and had no desire to live directly off the land again. For my parents and grandparents, that meant raising chickens for eggs, and livestock for their own meat, while planting huge vegetable gardens and crops for sale. For his grandparents, it perhaps meant hunting, fishing, and trading. Nevertheless, I consciously chose the busyness of urban life and was impatient to make my living in a nine-to-five salaried world.

Secondly, while I resented the poverty of my youth and spent many hours pondering types of socialist systems, it was never my intention to be a beneficiary. I was prepared to work hard and expected success and financial reward for my efforts.

Thirdly, I always felt isolated living on the farm and craved a more complex community. My grandparents from England crossed a vast ocean in search of a new world for themselves and I too wanted to travel and experience new adventures. While I was willing to embrace parenting, a cabin in the woods, without utilities, was too much of a step backward.

2005: All morning Will and I watched the last vigil for Pope John Paul II. One report commented how he demonstrated life as a gift and a duty. Finally news came that he passed 11:37 a.m. local time, 9:37 p.m. in Rome. We continued to watch testimonials all afternoon.

April 3: Innocence of children

Many levels of intervention are needed to reduce the exploitation of innocent children.

Dear little Cara,

1974: As spring flowed into summer, my reflections continued: “I am going to have a baby. We are going to have a baby. A moment of our ecstasy overflowed in the creation of new life. A baby will be born of our joys and struggles and sharing – a baby who will be not just a symbol of us but a living, breathing, completely new little person. And even though we separate,

the baby can still be born. And if I choose to let this life continue, will the baby still be born of us or just of me?" Confusion came full circle.

I worked for a delivery service that summer, driving around Calgary in a mini-truck with you in-utero. I returned to university in the fall, where you had the habit of waking up during Social Planning class for your morning aerobics while I tried to take notes.

When I moved to Edmonton, my first doctor had a waiting room always packed with people doing just that, waiting and waiting. I found the experience incredibly disrespectful and exercised my freedom to find another office. I fully understand that emergencies happen, but I do not accept the arrogance of practitioners who consistently operate with hours of back-log.

2005: Will and I watched the movie, *Born into Brothels*, the story of children in Calcutta, India. A woman photographer lived among the families intending to chronicle and document their lives with her still camera. She later gave cameras to a group of children in their early teens after teaching them how to take pictures.

The result was an Oscar-winning documentary as well as international recognition for the children. Many of their photographs toured museums and galleries around the world with money earned going back to their education.

The movie chronicled many difficulties the children faced in making a change. Their only chance to leave was to go away to boarding school, a decision that represented serious financial and social challenges for both them and the schools. Many levels of intervention were required to reduce exploitation and provide opportunity for those innocent children.

April 4: Prohibiting the purchase of sexual services

1999: **Sweden was the first country in the world to pass legislation prohibiting the purchase of sexual services.** Principles of legal, political, economic, and social equality were championed to ensure women and children, mostly girls, were freed from being used as commodities, bought, sold, and sexually exploited by men.

2005: **Nina Louise Courtepatte**, age 13, was found on a west Edmonton golf course. Five people were charged with her murder with trials and appeals happening over many years.

Dear Cara,

2005: Tragedies of street life are finally receiving more credibility in the media. An *Edmonton Sun* reporter, Shane Holladay, narrated the following under the headline “Working Girls Tell of Torture”:

“Amid tales of horror and degradation, Edmonton’s sex-trade workers told a special committee on prostitution they need help escaping the business – not legalization.

‘What I heard was nothing less than torture in some cases. They talked about what it does to your soul.’ Behind closed doors, Kate Quinn of the Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation said one woman told how she was forced to turn her first trick when she was 12 years old in order to feed her brothers. ... Canada must follow the example set by Sweden. There, legislators have targeted the consumer side of the sex industry.”

I was ecstatic to see some of my ideas repeated. Our focus must be to create safety in the community. Sexual exploitation is an extension of male domination and it is not helpful to punish service providers already victimized.

The philosophy behind the Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services is revolutionary. I advocated to “focus on consumers” for years before I realized a similar approach already existed somewhere in the world.

The Swedish legislation resulted from the work of Gunilla Ekberg, Minister of Industry, Employment, and Communications for the government of Sweden, and was reviewed in the October 2004 journal *Violence Against Women*:

“After several years of public debate initiated by the Swedish women’s movement, the Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services came into force on January 1, 1999. The Law is the first attempt by a country to address the root cause of prostitution and trafficking in beings: the demand, the men who assume the right to purchase persons for prostitution purchases. This ground-breaking law is a cornerstone of Swedish efforts to create a contemporary, democratic society where women and girls can live lives free of all forms of male violence.”

Let me repeat: there is a law in the world that prohibits the purchase of sexual services. The Swedish government claims full gender equality and equal participation must be norms in a contemporary and democratic society:

“In Sweden, prostitution is officially acknowledged as a form of male sexual violence against women and children... Without men’s demand for and use of women and girls for sexual exploitation, the global prostitution industry would not be able to flourish and expand.”

<http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdf/EkbergVAW.pdf>.

The government pledged money and assistance to women in terms of access to shelters, counselling, education, and job training. While there is considerable evidence the Swedish Law reduces prostitution and trafficking within their country, similar legislation and enforcement needs to happen across all countries to reduce global exploitation.



April 5: Amen. So be it.

A Child Speaks

It is my time.
I come into the world.
It matters not by design or accident,
conceived in love or lust.
I am here. I am now.
I am hungry and need care.
I have a strong life force.
I want to live and grow.
I do that best in the security of love.

2012: *Edmonton Journal* headline: “Housing Helps Mentally Ill, Study Says.” Imagine the implications of such a simple intervention!

Hi Sweetie,

2005: Pilgrims converged on Rome to pay their final respects to Pope John Paul II, popular for his messages of love, forgiveness, and hope. Just before he died, he stared from his bed at the window, looked at the crowds gathered below, and whispered “Amen.” So be it.

It’s difficult to accept that exploitation exists around the world. Among recently acquired documents was another paper, “Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart” by American psychologist and researcher Melissa Farley, also published in the October 2004 *Violence Against Women*.

Farley’s assertion was that violence against women should not be trivialized by legalization or stereotypes of male predatory behaviour. Exploited women manifest an accumulation of serious health problems, emotional devastation, and death rate 40 times higher than that of the general population. Customers who buy women, groups that promote legalization, and governments that support the sex industry all endanger women.

In summary, she stated:

“Prostitution is an institution that systematically discriminates against women, against the young, against the poor, and against ethnically subordinated groups... It

is a particularly vicious institution of inequality of the sexes... The silence of most of those [involved]... is a result of intimidation, terror, dissociation, and shame. Their silence, like the silence of battered women, should not be misinterpreted, ever, as their consent.” (p.1117)

Recent Edmonton research, *Breaking Down Barriers: One Step at a Time*, by Kate Quinn (2004) identified two main difficulties for women wanting to exit from exploitation. They were: (1) limited access to safe and affordable housing, and (2) enmeshment in the criminal justice system. To be fair, the city has started to reduce barriers. Several shelters, treatment facilities, transitional housing, and supported independent living residences are available. Unfortunately many do not meet the specific needs of women in transition from street life, and many women still fall through gaps in their search for safe and secure housing.

April 6: Too many bodies

2005: “Another body is a reminder of the danger in which desperate and vulnerable young women place themselves every day. I hope all Canadians will join with me in condemning violence and working to mobilize resources to ease the conditions of exploitation. The women and children of Canada and the world must not be for sale.” Horrified to hear of yet another body found, I prepared the above statement in case media phoned. They did not. Morning papers confirmed “evidence indicated foul play.”

Dear little Cara,

2005: Evening news described the body found as a girl only 14-15 years old with no matching record of a missing person. The general public has no idea how difficult it is to have missing person reports taken seriously. Neither apparently do the media.

Jane Fonda was a guest on *Larry King Live* speaking about her new book *My Life So Far*. When asked if writing her book had been cathartic, she replied it was “transformational.” She decided to stop living laterally, experience a deeper level, reflect on her role in many of her life

decisions, and to understand and forgive her parents. Regarding the toxicity of perfectionism she concluded, “Good enough is good enough.” It is more important to appreciate the people we love and those who have loved us because life is too short not to.

Meanwhile in Rome an estimated million people lined up to pay respects to Pope John Paul II. Another million people were believed to be on their way from Poland and as many as four million people were expected to attend the funeral. Rome was crowded and lines were long enough in 1998 when we visited during a normal summer. Local citizens were asked to open their doors to visitors.

April 7: World Health Day

A good mother loves her child. She is able to recognize and meet her child’s needs at every level of his or her development because she respects the child as an individual, not as a projection of her own needs.

Dear Cara,

1975: As I finished my final practicum of “learning how to be a counsellor,” I also prepared for my new role of motherhood. The above words, from a synopsis written at the time, attempted to transform my lingering resentments of being parented into a fresh perspective for being a parent. “A good mother,” I continued, “is able to provide her child with a sense of well-being because she herself is comfortable and well-adjusted.”

I was obviously aiming for improvement over my own mother. “A good mother does not ridicule, nor does she hold up herself as the ideal or others as bad examples... She does not begrudge the time and energy spent on her child, nor does she put a price on it.” Ingrained messages can be difficult to shake. I have learned it takes consistent awareness and vigilance to

put new skills into practice. Many people I've met over the years were horrified the first time they heard their parent's words come from their mouth.

Our first spring together was magical once I finished classes and was able to relax. You were such a good baby, always bright-eyed and curious, wearing newborn sized clothes until you were over three months old. I still have two of your Cabbage Patch dolls and sometimes buy them new outfits in "preemie" size. It's hard to remember you were ever that tiny. You liked the music from your wind-up doll and munched through teething with a rubber giraffe.

You were baptized in the Catholic Church at the end of our block, a church I too had attended with my godmother as a child. Auntie Benevolent, who cared for you during my months of school, was your godmother and her son was happy to become your "god-brother." We seemed to be on track and all was well with the world.

April 8: He loved the world

"Love one another." Is it really that simple?

Dear Cara,

2005: I arrived home late after an exhausting day, so tired and hungry I was almost sick. The rest of the evening found me in full withdrawal, huddled in my recliner, switching back and forth between channels to watch coverage of the Pope's funeral.

A glance over the *Edmonton Journal* revealed a letter that summed up the profound outpouring of love for Pope John Paul II. The author was Issy Burstyn:

"I am touched and saddened by the passing of John Paul II.
I am a Jew born in Poland and was sheltered from the Nazis by Polish Catholics for five years.
Karol Wojtyla was a good friend of the Jewish people and had close contact with the Jewish and Polish underground and the uprisings in Warsaw.

He was the first pope to visit Israel. He was the first pope to pray in a synagogue in Israel.

He was the most influential leader of the 20th century – a people pope dedicated for the people of his homeland and the world.

He was a political pope dedicated to making peace between nations and was a champion of freedom and dignity.

He loved the world and the world loved him.”

It sounds so simple. All we need to do is love and we will be loved in return. Scripture declares: “Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people’s sins but delights in the truth. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes.” (1st Corinthians 13: 4-7). The harder part is learning how to love when we are not loved first.

April 9: Reaching to the future

2002: A sixth murder charge was laid against Robert Pickton. The victim was **Andrea Joesbury**, age 22 when she disappeared the year before.

Dear Cara,

2005: Will woke up early to watch coverage of Prince Charles and Camilla’s wedding. I didn’t bother; I had watched his first wedding.

According to morning news, the 13-year-old girl found murdered liked to hang out at the mall and was not linked to sex trade. I doubt the same is true of her killer. So far investigators were complying with her parents’ wishes not to release her name. That apparently is their right. Perhaps it was also the right of his family not to release the name of the 59-year-old man who asphyxiated himself with a naked 15-year-old. (See November 20.)

The papers, of course, were full of funeral coverage for Pope John Paul II. An estimated 300,000 people attended the open-air mass in St. Peter's Square while millions more watched on giant television screens set up across the city and at public gatherings around the world. An estimated two million faithful came to Rome from the Pope's native Poland. It was the biggest funeral of modern times, attracting about 200 world and religious leaders.

John Paul's 26-year pontificate was third longest in history. He is best remembered for reaching out to the whole world and to young people as the future. An estimated 1.4 million pilgrims filed past his body while he lay in state. Prayers during the funeral mass were conducted in at least 10 languages to represent the diversity of church faithful around the world. After the service, John Paul II's coffin was carried inside the basilica to be buried in the catacombs below.

April 10: Pregnant and distressed?

"Your peace is more important than driving yourself crazy trying to understand why something happened the way it did. Let it go." Idil Ahmed, Evolver Social Movement

2017: Your picture appeared top row center on a CBC collage featuring the Missing and Murdered Women of Canada.

Dear Cara,

1975: You were a few months old and I was a "welfare" lady," albeit temporarily, but conscious of the stigma and even more so of the lack of money. Many feelings swirled around me - a sense of failure to be without resources at age 26, unsettled after not being able to look after you while I finished classes, exhausted and needing to restore my energies, wanting more time to bond with you, and grateful the opportunity for a break existed.

Before Christmas I went to Birthright, an organization that supports women through unplanned pregnancies. I used to read the Personals columns and every night there it was, “Pregnant and distressed? Phone...” So one day I did. They told me to come down and they gave me lots of baby things. Second-hand.

One bag of clothes was still unsorted. Many things were nice, that much less to buy. One of the gifts was a carton (6 boxes) of no-longer-for-sale Flush-a-byes. When I phoned back months later to see if I could get more, I couldn’t believe it was the same gracious lady.

“Didn’t we help you BEFORE?”

“Oh yes, that’s why I thought...”

“You’re out of diapers ALREADY?”

“Well, yes, I...” (Really a cartoon is only 180 diapers and she is changed more than twice a day.)

“Are you HOME now?”

“Yes, I decided not to go back to work right away...”

“Well, if you’re at home, you should have time to WASH diapers. We’re saving ours for REGULAR clients.”

“OK, I’m sorry. I just thought...” (I just thought they might want to help again because they really did the first time I called.) One of many challenges facing the poor is learning appropriate humility. We/they must accept the definitions of client and parameters of assistance with various helping agencies plus dealing with the attitude that once helped is enough.

2005: This afternoon Will and I took three grand-boys skating at West Edmonton Mall. As you know, I never did learn to skate well and wobbled my way around the boards a few times. An observer encouraged me with, “Never too late, eh?” to which I replied, “Almost!”

A western dance later that evening reminded me of single days and learning to two-step. I sadly remembered Grandma mocking my early attempts to imitate moves at old time family dances and felt a renewed surge of appreciation for gentlemen friends who later patiently coached me around the floor counting out basic steps and rhythm.

April 11: Living on welfare

“Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Matthew 5:3

Dear Cara,

1975: The summer I spent at home with you, my welfare budget was \$208 a month. That didn't make much difference to our lifestyle because my previous student loan budget of \$300 a month included \$80 for babysitting. Although amounts have changed over the years, basic principles stay the same. The poor are subject to a lower than average standard of living. I was able to afford rent because we were sharing with my sister. There was no allowance for a phone as that was considered a luxury.

Food allowance for one child was \$20 a month. At the time, you consumed Pablum, two jars of baby food, one Heinz teething biscuit, half a tin of juice, and about three cups of milk a day for a total cost of 90 cents. Oh dear, at \$.90 times 30 days, you were already over-eating.

Your clothing allowance was \$9 a month, three pair of sleepers or four boxes of disposable diapers, which ever came first. Oh, but there was an extra \$6 a month laundry allowance for babies. At 70 cents a load, that covered about two washings a week.

My “social worker” came for a home visit one morning when I was in bed at 11:30 a.m. The furnace had been off all weekend and you were up crying. Mrs. R looked as if she didn't believe me. She declined coffee and wanted to discuss the legal responsibilities of your father.

“He IS the only possible father?”

“Yes, of course. What do you mean...?” (Oh my goodness... What do you think, that I pulled his name out of a hat?) “I don’t see any point forcing the issue,” I protested. “Besides, I’ll be working again soon and I’m quite willing to look after her myself.”

“Oh, you WILL be?”

She thought we should discuss it further another day and we went to check on you, finally and peacefully asleep. My bed was unmade, of course, because I’d just got up and obviously slept on only one side. My dark socks were still on the floor. Mrs. R nudged them with her foot. Suspiciously? Maybe she just didn’t like socks on the floor? Maybe she resented the fact she had to get up early every morning to go work while I received \$208 a month for staying home?

April 12: Marathon of Hope

“I am not a dreamer, and I am not saying that this will initiate any kind of definite answer or cure to cancer. But I believe in miracles. I have to.”

Terry Fox, 1979

2003: A woman’s skull found near Miquelon Lake, south of Edmonton, north of Camrose, was identified over four months later as **Debbie Darlene Lake**, age 28, mother of four. Debbie had been missing since November 2002. Relatives remembered her as a loving mother and generous soul.

Dear Cara,

2005: Terry Fox was a true Canadian hero and today marked the 25th anniversary of the beginning of his Marathon of Hope. Terry was born July 28, 1958, in Manitoba and grew up in Port Coquitlam, B.C. At 18 years old, he was diagnosed with a malignant tumour in his right knee and his leg was amputated four days later.

The day before his amputation, Terry read an article about an amputee who ran in the New York marathon. That became his new vision - to meet his challenge head on and conquer

his disability. He incorporated all the feelings he encountered through his ordeal of treatment and determined to push himself to the limit to fight cancer.

Two years after his operation, Terry began a running program. He trained for 15 months, until he could run 26 miles a day. On April 12, 1980, he dipped his artificial leg into the Atlantic Ocean and began his trek across Canada. Enthusiasm grew and money was collected.

Terry's initial goal was to raise one million dollars but by the time he reached Toronto, he increased his goal to \$24 million – one dollar for every Canadian. For each of the 143 days of his Marathon of Hope, Terry ran a grueling 42 kilometers, just over 25 miles.

Terry's run ended abruptly on September 1, 1980, after 5373 kilometers (3224 miles) near Thunder Bay, Ontario. His cancer had returned and spread to his lungs. A week later the CTV network organized a special telethon on his behalf with over \$10 million raised in five hours. Terry's goal was reached in February 1981 when his Marathon of Hope fund topped \$24 million. Terry died on June 28, 1981, one month short of his 23rd birthday.

The year following Terry's death a bronze statue was unveiled at Terry Fox Lookout, a site just off the Terry Fox Courage Highway overlooking Lake Superior near where he ended his run. We drove past Terry's monument on our move to Nova Scotia in 1987 but Block wouldn't stop. He said we didn't have time.

Terry's story, of course, lives on through marathons held around the world. His early life, his struggles, inspirational quotes, and the successes of the Marathon of hope are summarized on www.terryfox.org. A few more of his thoughts include: "As usual, it was tough. If I died, I would die happy because I was doing what I wanted to do. How many people could say that?" ... "It took cancer to realize that being self-centered is not the way to live. The answer is to try and help others."

April 13: Power, control, and greed

1998: It's not often we get to hear directly from a pimp. A 26-year-old convicted pimp spoke to the *Edmonton Journal* on the condition his name not be used. These were his words:

"Trying to get out of the business when you have a pimp is difficult. ... [Girls] can flee to safe houses but pimps follow them and hang around outside. They wait for the girls to come out for a smoke or go to the store. Then they'll either convince the girls to come back or hurt them. ... If people only knew what really happens...how degrading it is for women or kids to sell themselves. **It's all about power, control, greed, and money. That's where it begins and that's where it stops.**" (Emphasis added.)

Edmonton Journal reporter Raquel Exner in "Children in the Sex Trade"

Dear Cara,

1975: Another memory from our "welfare" days was meeting with B.M.P. Imagine receiving a letter from someone with only initials. B.M turned out to be a Mr. P. His role was to "pursue maintenance" on your behalf, i.e. to obtain financial support from your father. Overall, I found it very humiliating to have personal details of my life jotted down on paper. Questions my family and friends had been sensitive enough not to ask were a matter of routine.

B.M. spread his brief case on the kitchen table and accepted my offer of orange juice. "It's nice to be able to accept refreshments," he said, "Can't do that with all my clients, you know." I wasn't used to having my kitchen considered as anything but acceptable. None of my friends were relieved to notice I used clean glasses.

When did I meet your father? Fall of 1972. Had it really been that long already? Well, we were friends for about a year before becoming serious. Friends - why didn't I leave it at that? What was the turning point? What did he say when I told him I was pregnant?

It was a mutual decision to separate. Is falling in or out of love ever a decision? I wanted to go back to university. That made us grow further apart. He had never been to university.

B.M. tells me I'm probably better off now. Yes, I know, I guess that's why I'm here. But it's not easy. B.M said he gets a lot of that type. Except to me, Chaos wasn't a "type." He

Seasons of Life ~ Spring

said he didn't want to be like that and I believed him. I wanted to help him. That's no basis for a marriage. Yes, I know that too.

2005: In retrospect, I fully support recovery of maintenance from any man who fathers a child and abdicates responsibility. However, emotional support cannot be mandated. All parents have a financial responsibility and all children have the right to know their genetic heritage.

Evening news reported four people, two named and two juveniles, were arrested in the murder of the 13-year-old girl found on the golf course. She was lured there for a "party."

April 14: So many questions - so few answers

So many memories. So many questions. So much grief. So few answers.

Hi Sweetie,

1975: Among my memory scraps, I found a poem I wrote about your father:

"The day will come, like a summer storm
when you begin to wonder...
If you pursue him, you will never find him.
You may see him pass on the street or even visit his house
But you will not meet him for he will choose to remain silent.

But if you learn his haunts and sit and wait
He may, like the proverbial butterfly, stop and light beside you
And for a brief moment you will understand
that his love for you is real but beyond his own expression.

And the two of you will still be strangers,
wary of each other from your own distance.
Your heart will be torn as you try to understand
And he will not admit that you care."

2005: J'lyn Nye, then a reporter with *Global News*, produced a documentary on the impact of sexual exploitation. We spoke on the phone, reminiscing about your exploits. You were an independent expressive little girl. You liked to do things your own way, as all children

do. You were sociable and loved animals, you were fun loving and impulsive, conscientious but easily bored. Your friends remembered you as someone who made them laugh.

Talking brought back more memories. You were not an academic and I worried about what employment you might find. One day while at a hotel to give a presentation, I passed the laundry room and noticed a few ladies working together, talking and folding sheets. I watched for a few moments, thinking maybe here was a job you could handle. One lady spoke with me and invited me to bring you to meet her. We never did go and you were later hired at a cookie factory.

April 15: Project KARE Website

2005: Today was official launch of the Project KARE website. Their posted framework is: **"No greater honour will be bestowed on an officer or a more profound duty imposed on him than when he is entrusted with the investigation of the death of a human being.** It is his duty to find the facts regardless of colour, lifestyle or creed without prejudice and to let no power on earth deter him from presenting the facts to the courts without regard to personality." (Emphasis added.)

My dear Cara,

2005: Global TV wanted a response to the official launch of the Project KARE website. A cameraman came by and I shared my happiness that the website was up and running. I was also anxious to learn about the other 78 young women whose deaths were being investigated. These women need to stay in the consciousness and conscience of Albertans.

Project KARE was established by the RCMP in October 2003 to deal with unsolved homicides and missing persons in Alberta. For every unsolved murder, there must a murderer who supposedly has family and friends, or at least acquaintances. Somebody must know something. I hope tips will lead to some convictions.

J'lyn Nye came for a longer interview. How long were you on the streets? I really don't know, maybe off and on the last two years of your life, after you got evicted from your apartment. Somebody told me stupid Dipstick kicked in your window and "reminded" you how to make money.

Your so-called friend, always "Dipstick" in my mind, was one of the most despicable characters you ever brought home. He was a tall stupid young man with a dumb laugh whose only ability or ambition in life seemed to be to grow hair. He lived in the basement of his mother's house, she apparently fed his visitors, and you were smitten with him.

Did you ever tell me about your involvement? No, for the most part it was something you did not talk about.

When I think back, there were a couple times you tried to give me clues. The power of denial is strong. I don't know what I could have done differently if I had known differently. You were living on the edge, moving around the city, and doing drugs with Patch.

Patch was your boyfriend for a number of years. I think you met him through Dipstick, although he was more polite, capable of conversation, and intermittently employed. I don't know how much or how often you did drugs together. Patch seemed to genuinely care for you. Sometimes he looked after you and I suppose sometimes you looked after him.

I am haunted by some of your adolescent pictures – even though you are smiling, the light is gone from your eyes. Your grade eight counselor told me she had never met anyone so angry, and I thought, "Yes, try living with her." The cruel price of Block's oppression was that while I was busy trying to make the world OK for him, I didn't know how to intervene with you or for you. Or maybe I hoped you would bend like me to help keep the peace.

April 16: Memories

1997: Photos from our first year back in Edmonton show your brightness and personality returned. I am grateful to have salvaged a couple years for you. Your last picture shows the light fading. By then, I didn't know what to do again.

2005: The burned body of **Charlene Marie Gauld**, age 20, was found in a wooded area near Camrose, close to where Debbie Lake was discovered two years earlier. Charlene was the mother of a young daughter. Her parents had worked tirelessly to keep her from sinking into the depths of addiction. Her mother stated: "Charlene came from a loving and caring family. We are not ashamed of our daughter and although we didn't support her lifestyle, we have always supported her."

Dear Cara,

1975: You were seven months old when I started my new job. That was an exciting and scary time for me after an intense year. You were born during Christmas break, low birthweight because of placenta deficiency, and I went back to school because you were going to be in hospital for a while. In retrospect, that wasn't a good decision although it seemed like the best plan at the time. I finished my classes exhausted and had a couple happy months of reprieve to enjoy the hands-on experience of mothering and refocus my energies.

I was fortunate to be offered a government position; you were accepted into a subsidized day home program; and another aunt co-signed a loan for me to buy a car. We were living with my sister so rental costs were shared, and life was good. I remember practicing grounding, without realizing what it was called, when I dreamed about wandering the city seeking shelter with babe in arms. I would wake in a panic and calm down with deep breathing, repeating affirmations such as, "We're OK, we have a place to live, I have a job, we have money..." To this day, self-reliance and security are still crucial for me and I have trouble imagining how many seem to live day-to-day with little concern for their future.

2005: The young woman killed on the golf course was identified as *Nina-Louise Courtepatte*. The *Edmonton Journal* covered her memorial service where many remembered her curious and vibrant spirit. “She was a 13-year-old girl who loved to dance in front of a mirror while talking on the phone. She was a girl who changed her outfit several times a day. She was a girl who always had a smile on her face and who made her peers feel good about themselves.”

Her teacher paid tribute, “She wanted people to be kind to each other and she wanted the world to be fair. It was her passion.” Another friend remembered, “She was always smiling, no matter what. She was one of the happiest persons I ever met. She could make you happy no matter what and it’s sad that she’s gone now.”

Father Jim Holland of Edmonton’s Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples suggested her tragic death taught the community a valuable life lesson. “We need to look after our children. They are our future. They are priceless. We cannot let them go so young. Each of us, not just her blood relatives, her family, but all of us in the community must look after our children. If we learn nothing else from this death, we learn that if we help our children, her death is not in vain.”

As J’lyn and I looked through pictures, we found one of you and your friend Audacious dressed for a party. She is gone now too, killed in a car accident. The two of you were good friends until she allegedly “stole” one of your boyfriends, I was so annoyed the night she to the apartment inebriated made a mess trying to cook scrambled eggs.

April 17: Check “missing” reports?

2006: **Sangetta Khanna**, age 41, mother of a teenage son, disappeared from Mill Woods. Her car was found in a bank parking lot. The main suspect in her disappearance was an unnamed man with whom she had a brief rocky relationship. He later died and her body has not yet been found.

Dear Cara,

1976: During your first year, we lived with Auntie Grace in a shared apartment. I started work that summer and was able to purchase a new-to-me car. We were fortunate to find a wonderful day-home where you spent many happy years. Your day-mom's three children were like your siblings and their dad was "Dad" to you too.

The next summer we moved into our own little house, at least the main floor of a house. I marveled at the sounds of little footsteps as you mastered walking. You still talked gibberish for the most part, in contrast to an older 2-year-old downstairs who used to knock on the door and ask if she could play with you.

We had a new friend "Jay-Jay" who bought your first skates and started to teach you. That was the deal – he bought skates for you and I bought some for myself so we could all go together. One day in his apartment, you poured his shampoo into the tub and he was annoyed that I had not taught you not to do that. "That's not the way it works," I explained. "With children, you need to put things out of their reach." Another time I reminded him to watch his language when you announced you couldn't find your "f-ing" coat. Poor Jay-Jay. I miss him too. He had trouble figuring out his life and ended his struggle on a lonely beach.

2005: Yet another body was discovered, this time in a wooded area near Camrose, close to where **Debbie Lake** was found two years ago. I am tired of hearing about bodies. Debbie was 29 years old when she disappeared November 2002. Her birthday was April 3, 1974, the same year you were born; her remains were found April 12, 2003, five months after she disappeared.

Project KARE was reportedly investigating 71 active cases, 40 homicides and 31 missing persons. One homicide and two missing were male. The process of checking missing person reports had begun. How discouraging for survivors that the primary purpose of missing person

files is to identify human remains. Prior to your disappearance, I truly believed citizens had a right to expect that police would attempt to investigate or find missing persons. Little did I realize it was a challenge even to have their names recorded.

April 18: Nearly a dozen?

2001: **Yvonne Delores Jacobsen**, age 37, was found suffocated in her Edmonton apartment. Her boyfriend was also found dead with a suicide note.

2005: The latest body found was identified as **Charlene Gauld**, age 20.

Dear Cara,

2005: Media referred to “nearly a dozen” women dumped in Edmonton area the past few years, as if being dumped in the country was different than being found in an alley or dumpster.

What about women found in the city of Edmonton?

Investigators concluded the death of young **Nina-Louise**, found two weeks ago, was not directly linked to exploitation or the drug trade. It may be some relief to the family to not have to carry that extra stigma. Nevertheless, their daughter is gone prematurely and those arrested can hopefully shed light on those who kill for sport.

Police are scouring roadsides near the latest crime scene in search of clues. More statistics were revealed in the *Edmonton Journal*: A joint RCMP and Edmonton city police force looked at unsolved casualties in Western Canada dating back to 1982. They found 315 in total, 83 in Alberta. Of those 40 were chosen by Project KARE for further investigation along with 39 missing persons. Thirty investigators were assigned to work on the files.

It was reported sex trade workers are relatively anonymous with few strong ties to society. I take strong exception to that statement. Some may have damaged ties because of the

addiction component and trails are often cold by the time bodies are found. **The bigger problem is limited credibility and resources given to the registration of missing persons.**

CBC Radio called for an interview. Sometime my bitterness is hard to contain. The question was about drug enforcement. Of course, I agreed curtailing the drug trade would be a benefit to society. Attention must also be given to consumers of sexual exploitation who provide the money for drugs. I would also like to see consumerism contained and more money for exit services. If a portion of the amount spent on investigating unsolved murders was made available for prevention and rehabilitation program, there might be fewer murders to solve.

April 19: “Archetypal male fantasy”

1995: 168 people killed in Oklahoma City bombing, an act of domestic terrorism.

2015: The remains of **Delores Dawn Brower**, age 33 when she disappeared, were found near Leduc eleven years later. She had desperately wanted to get off the streets of Edmonton.

2016: **Nicole Leeanne Cooney**, age 30, was gunned down in Edmonton. A man known to her was later charged with first-degree murder.

2017: **Wendy Margaret Carlick**, age 51, and **Sarah MacIntosh**, age 53, were found dead in a Whitehorse residence. Sarah, mother of three, was a member of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and worked as an employment counsellor. Wendy, originally from Good Hope Lake, British Columbia, became a strong advocate for missing and murdered Indigenous women after her daughter disappeared in 2007. (See May 27.)

Dear Cara,

2005: The *Edmonton Journal* discussed the “problem” of prostitution and option of legalization. A columnist referred to a legal sexual buffet as the “archetypal male fantasy.” Apparently male fantasy does not recognize the incongruence of girls introduced to exploitation as young teens, or coming from troubled backgrounds, or dealing with drug addiction.

I wondered why marginalized women rather than their “buyers” were considered the social problem. Who are the men who support exploitation? What are their motives? “Some say they simply want sex. Others are addicted to danger and a few clearly hate women. Many claim they’re just lonely,” so the columnist writes and these themes are commonly repeated.

However, someone willing to pay for a service and another desperate enough to provide it does not constitute an equal and respectful relationship. I would like to think world that social consciousness can evolve sufficiently that trafficking of women for sexual services is not an acceptable practice, regardless of archetypal male fantasies.

Pictures of 20-year-old *Charlene Gauld*, the latest victim, were especially haunting because her beautiful young face, bright smile, and dark shining eyes remind me of you. You and seven other young women found since 1988 were featured in today’s *Edmonton Journal*. Of the 11 named, eight were in their twenties.

In Medicine Wheel tradition, Frogs Return Moon teaches perseverance and stability. We are called to balance earth and sky, to explore and sustain ourselves, while we maintain an orderly and beautiful environment. The happy sound of frogs croaking in ponds or prairie sloughs is a sure sign of spring.

April 20: Frogs Return Moon

Our legal system is based on the premise that criminals will tell the truth under oath. That makes about as much sense as assuming they would use registered guns.

Dear Cara,

2005: More stories about the recent murders include the possibility of a serial killer. If one person is responsible for several deaths, will he more likely be caught? As if those who kill only once can be explained as what - an accident? I personally find it more frightening to imagine a subculture of multiple killers.

Thirty officers were assigned to RCMP Project KARE. The last two women found had provided contact information and DNA samples, which made it painfully obvious that did not help prevent their deaths. Was the goal only a more expedient way of identifying bodies? Maybe that's not fair. KARE officers are becoming known on the street and establishing trust so hopefully somebody who knows something will be more inclined to come forward.

Unfortunately, lives are not easily traced in an underground world. Drug dealers and pimps, driven by greed to maintain their pathetic parasitic existence through fear and violence, are not likely to show compassion or volunteer information.

The suggestion has been made that johns convicted of soliciting sex be required to give a DNA sample. Now that makes sense because they come from a pool of potential killers. Society's protection of johns' right to privacy continues to amaze me.

One argument given is they would be embarrassed for their family or employer to find out. The counter-argument is that might be a deterrent. I remember a newspaper editor explaining years ago that publishing names of "johns" would not happen, as "enforcement" was not the role of a newspaper. And yet the media is prone to sensationalizing victims as if they were to blame for their own demise.

Pretty 20-year-old *Charlene* was described as a young mom struggling to go straight. That makes sense. I'm sure part of every addict wants to be free in spite of momentary highs or relief. Her parents tried desperately to save her from drug addiction. Of course, all parents want their children to grow up strong and healthy.

April 21: Time clarifies trauma

“Our mind does not erase trauma. Time, in fact, makes it more clear. People pushed to the point of destruction are dismissed as damaged goods.”

General Romeo Dallaire

Dear Cara,

2005: The social work conference “Political is Personal” was a perfect fit for me as I’ve spent the last decade advocating for changes to better serve vulnerable youth.

The day began with Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire who served 35 years with the Canadian Armed Forces and was Force Commander of the UN Assistance Mission to Rwanda in 1993. His mission was to keep peace but he did not have authority to defend civilians. Instead he watched machete-wielding forces go on a killing rampage in 1994 and massacre 800,000 men, women, and children in 100 days. This has been called the worst genocide of the 20th century.

After Rwanda, General Dallaire sank into a deep depression, was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and medically dismissed from the army in December 1999. He worked hard to put his life back together and has become a passionate speaker on humanitarian and ethical issues. His book, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (2003), details the terrible atrocities he witnessed in Rwanda and his personal struggle in dealing with the haunting tragedy. On March 24, 2005 he was appointed to the Senate of Canada.

General Dallaire explained that our mind does not erase trauma. Time, in fact, improves clarity. We all work within structures that have priorities other than human beings. People pushed to the point of destruction are dismissed as damaged goods. He suggested society has created a new world “disorder” with 80% of people living in inhuman conditions, a world of ethnic cleansing, global terrorism, legal mercenaries, ambiguity, and complexity.

The injuries of this era are problems of the mind, the vulnerability of recurring memories. Horror, mutilation, and rape are tools of genocide in scales beyond what we can imagine. We lose our sensitivity to humanity when people not personally impacted establish priorities. We need to empower ourselves to solve problems and live with consequences.

The dream haunting Dallaire was of thousands of African eyes expressing bewilderment that he was sent to save them and could do nothing. Cara, what haunts me are your flat hopeless eyes in old pictures, a silent rebuke that I could not save even my own daughter.

“How many pairs of eyes have we seen,” General Dallaire asked during his presentation, “that have not received what they need to live?” We need to find solutions for the legal, ethical, and moral dilemmas. His underlying question was: “Are all humans human or are some more human than others?” We must acknowledge we all work within a history that treats others as less than ourselves.

Leadership and solutions need to come from front lines rather than above. We need to be vocal, expressive, and unrelenting. There can be no limits to our commitment. We will stop conflict only when we believe we are all the same and act on that belief. If we resign when people have faith in us, we abandon them.

April 22: Earth Day - Call to action

2005: A memorial rally was held yesterday at the Legislature in honour of **Charlene Gauld** and other young women from Edmonton who lost their lives. The rally drew a crowd of over 100 people, many of whom voiced their concern over the growing number of young women who have disappeared or been killed.

2005: The RCMP announced foul play was suspected in the disappearance of **Maggie Burke**, age 21, who had been missing since December 9, 2004.

Dear Cara,

2005: The *Edmonton Journal* Letters page yesterday printed several letters under the banner of “A Call to Action” in response to the accumulative loss of vulnerable young women and the stigmatizing language used in reporting their deaths.

Kelly Pratt from Edmonton wrote:

“How many young women must die before Edmontonians become outraged? ... If I went shopping this afternoon only to be found dead and lifeless in an open field five days later, I believe the community would be saddened and outraged. I would hope my employer would be instrumental in raising funds and pressuring the city and province to devote the necessary resources to find this monster. The bottom line is that no woman’s life should be valued more than another. Women of Edmonton, we need to strengthen the voice of the powerless.”

Doris Wrench Eisler from St Albert wrote:

“There is at least one sadistic murderer of girls and young women out there, but the situation seems to elicit far less interest and concern that it should. It seems to be enough, in some quarters, to haggle over whether the evidence points to a single depraved killer or many, when neither outcome is relevant or encouraging. ... This is a terrible injustice and we risk our international reputation as a caring country by not expending the maximum effort and resources to stop it.”

D. Shanks from Edmonton wrote:

“...In writing the front-page headline... you have harmed the credibility of your story by impairing your readers’ and the public’s ability to empathize with the victim and the victim’s family. Further, the headline - used solely for shock value - degrades and debases the victim. Despite her lifestyle – something that probably played a significant role in her death – she should be treated with respect and humility, not the shame and humiliation the headline conveys. Your headlines should better reflect and respect the well-written story you would have us read. These women have lost their lives; do not take their last bit of dignity away too.”

It is encouraging that people are speaking. Romeo Dallaire said we must accept we sometimes deal with evil in society. Is treating world citizens with equality, humanity, kindness, and nurturing enough to curtail evil? I have learned to speak with compassion to “johns” at

Prostitution Offender Programs and am encouraged that many open themselves to a new perspective and show remorse.

On the other hand, I also believe society has a responsibility to curtail dealers, pimps, and consumers who exploit without regard for the humanity of their victims. There are psychopaths among us. The vulnerable of society have a right to be protected.

April 23: A child's perspective

"If I had my child to raise all over again, I'd finger paint more, and point my finger less. I'd do less correcting and more connecting. I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes. I would care to know less, and know to care more."

Diana Loomans

Dear Cara,

1977: You received a yellow duck for Easter, a riding toy. A new little girl downstairs used to race that duck across the room, pivoting at the last moment to avoid crashing into the wall, and take off in another direction. You were more cautious at the time and preferred treating your duck almost as a companion.

Another friend gave you a huge stuffed pink panther. It was so big I thought you might be afraid but you slept with it sitting beside your bed, its big pink head resting beside yours.

1980: My days at work were long and exhausting. I was a "social assistance" worker, receiving a professional salary but still living on a "welfare" budget after my car payments and expenses, student loans, and daycare costs were deducted from my monthly pay. I remember once you trying to pry open my eyes when I rested on the couch after a long day at work.

As a break for myself, I attended an evening writing class for a few weeks. One assignment was experimenting with perspectives:

A Child's Point of View

My mommy had a bad day today. I can tell because she was in a hurry when she came to get me at daycare. She didn't want to push me on the swing or wait until I said good-bye to the guinea pig. She just kept saying she wanted to go home because she was tired and her head hurt. And then she laid down on the couch and told me not to bother her for a few minutes. And she got mad when I tried to open her eyes so I took my kitty and went to visit Michelle.

Sometimes in the mornings she's mad too. She says to hurry up because she doesn't want to be late for work. I feel bad when I go to daycare after my mom was yelling at me. Sometimes I have an accident.

My mommy says I'm her favourite little girl in the whole world and she's so lucky to have me. My kitty's so cute too and I love him. We don't have a daddy. My mommy used to have a baby in her tummy and it was me. Before that she was all by herself, I guess.



April 24: Parenting addicted teens

1975: The body of **Karen Ewanciw**, age 11, was found by a jogger in a ravine near where we lived. I was almost finished my final BSW practicum at the time.

2005: **Sarah Fouillard**, age 27, was found dead by a friend in her west-end home. She had been assaulted earlier in the week but had not gone to hospital or reported her injuries to police.

Dear Cara,

2005: I remembered a story years ago of parents who chained their daughter inside their apartment to prevent her from leaving. When Child Protection authorities investigated, the parents explained it was a long and light flexible chain. The young lady could access the fridge, her bed, bathroom, living room, and TV. All the comforts of home were available while she was protected from negative outside influences.

I often sympathized with those parents in their misguided attempt to keep their child safe. If I could have locked you in the house during our turbulent years, I might have. Instead I did what seemed to be “normal.” I met your friends and tried to keep communication open with their parents. I encouraged you to take part in extra-curricular activities. You had an allowance for chores to help teach responsibility and the value of money. Yet you wanted to explore the world in your own impulsive, adventurous way. I wish we had found a happier meeting place.

Media reported Charlene’s family (See April 16) did everything they could to keep her from sinking into the depths of addiction. At one point they put sensors on doors and windows of their home so they could tell if she tried to leave. They enrolled her in a variety of support programs. Sometimes we as parents run out of ideas. If we try too hard, we are labeled “co-dependent.” If we back off, we are seen as “abandoning.” To parent an addicted teen is a difficult role.

April 25: Victims of Homicide

1995: The Victims of Homicide support group in Edmonton was founded by Joyce and Noel Farion, the year after their son Scott was murdered. It was patterned after Parents of Murdered Children in the U.S.

2013: **Cheyenne Marie Fox**, age 20, was found lifeless at the bottom of a Toronto high-rise after she allegedly fell from the 24th floor. Although police determined there was no evidence of criminal activity, she is believed to be a victim of human trafficking. A “customer” reported she had jumped.

Dear Cara,

2005: The *Edmonton Sun* revisited a 30-year-old murder case. ***Karen Ewanciw***, age 11, was found sexually assaulted and beaten to death in a ravine April 24, 1975. I remember the incident well because we lived in the area. You would have been almost four months old. Later we moved even closer to the ravine and used to ride bikes along the riverbank. Your daycare was a few blocks from where Karen was found and I thought of her often.

Victims of Homicide group meetings have been a great support over the years. Our founder, Joyce, was watching a show called “Parents of Murdered Children” on *Oprah* one day and thought, “I can do that.” She contacted a number of parents in the news who had lost children to murder. They began to meet and a number of early members form the core group.

Many people gathered this evening. Our facilitator was a special lady who worked with the group off and on over the years. She reminded us we need a safe environment for healing and that grief takes a long time. One new couple had lost their 20-year-old son two months earlier. They were still numb with shock and pain. Another woman dealt with four homicides over 15 years, her brother, sister, fiancé and another brother. It’s hard to imagine so much grief and yet “the sun makes me happy” she said.

Another’s sister was murdered by her husband. About her sorrow, she said, “It doesn’t get less, it gets different.” One man’s daughter was killed in the LRT. He has difficulty going where the murder occurred. Another woman who lost her youngest daughter at age 16 said, “Grief is forever.” A young couple lost her father when he was bound and murdered by a home invader on parole. Her elderly mother, who’d also been bound and gagged, was later harassed by the killer’s defense attorney. A common theme among survivors is further trauma during legal proceedings.

One man shared a dream where his deceased son said, “Keep on trucking.” His wife reflected, “Grief changes everything.” Another son’s death was ruled an industrial accident until autopsy discovered bullet holes. A retired couple lost their son when he was sucker punched at a nightclub. His attacker was later acquitted. Someone else’s son was believed to have been killed by a young woman with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. The woman disappeared among speculation that she could be one of the recent bodies found. This caused mixed feelings for the mother as she did not wish death on her son’s assailant.

Such was a typical meeting, so many stories not suitable for sharing over coffee with colleagues who may be discussing home renovations or family activities.

April 26: Hard questions

2001: The body of **Ginger Lee Bellerose**, age 26, mother of one son, was found in an inner atrium of the 90-year-old condemned downtown International Hotel. An autopsy revealed she died from head injuries. Evidence indicated she put up a struggle and crawled on her hands and knees in an attempt to escape. The caretaker was charged two years later and eventually found guilty of second-degree murder in 2005. Ginger was described as an animal lover who always made people laugh.

Dear Cara,

2005: Media at the time of Ginger’s death reported vicious and brutal trauma to her upper body and head. It was believed she died one to five weeks before she was found. It’s difficult to imagine how many people walked down the street during that time.

Melody Beattie is one of my favorite authors and many questions haunted me as I worked my way through *Finding Your Way Home: A Soul Survival Kit* (2010). There are many days when I feel as if I died with you. When you were little, I rejoiced in caring for you. As you grew older, it seemed my energy drained. Some of Melody’s ideas include:

“When we’re on our spiritual path, we can relax, trust, experience, and release each emotion as it comes and ask our souls where they want to go ... every experience we go through is for a purpose. (p.37)

There’s a blueprint for your life in the DNA of your soul. Opening your heart activates that plan.” (p.42) ...It’s about learning to choose joy. It’s about learning to choose life. (p.43)

It’s important to be able to pour our whole hearts and souls into whatever we want to do... When we’re on the right path, the energy opens up and pours for us, from us, and through us.” (p.45-46)

Melody’s challenge was to ask myself hard questions. Do I trade my joy for what I think I want? What would I like to do that I am not doing in my life? If I wasn’t afraid to try, what would I do? Who would be with me? If I lived with faith instead of fear, would that change my life? What is my fantasy home, my fantasy work? What can I do to bring my gifts to the world?

April 27: Daycare days

2003: **Katie Sylvia Ballantyne**, age 40, was last seen. Her decomposed body was later found in July by a farmer swathing his field. (See July 7.)

Hi Cara,

1979: At four years old, you graduated to a tricycle and a play set. I spent hours walking up and down the sidewalk in front of our house with you on your trike. A little girl moved in next door and the two of you became great friends, spending endless hours together. I dated a man you called “Aucin” who bought you a spring horse for Christmas. You loved that horse and spent hours grooming and decorating it.

You wanted your own radio alarm for mornings so I bought one. I had my own little routine of listening to a few songs before getting out of bed. You too were slow in the morning

so I was willing to try anything. Usually though, I still had to tickle and cuddle and coax to get you on your way.

You moved to daycare when you were four years old, after spending the summer with Marie Clare. She was a lovely school-age girl who used to babysit occasionally in the evenings. When your day mom wanted the summer off, I approached Marie Clare and her mother wisely suggested it would be easier for you to go to their home during the day.

Your day mom retired from day-home work after her own children reached school age, and we were very fortunate to find a wonderful daycare close to our house, except there were no openings until September. I remember the parade of parents peeling children off their legs in the morning, begging them to get ready at the end of the day, and sighing in frustration at finding the inevitable wet clothes in lockers after “accidents.” Ever the responsible parent, I became involved with the day care Board.

2005: I phoned your friend Jessica but her phone was out of service. Her number was very similar to mine so she often received media calls by accident and reporters were surprised to learn she knew us. She frequently phoned me around those times to share memories.

April 28: Workplace Injury Day of Mourning

The National Day of Mourning honours those who lost their lives or suffered injury or illness due to work-related causes. It is also a day to improve health and safety in the workplace. April 28 was chosen because on this date in 1914, Canada's first comprehensive workers' compensation package was passed. The Canadian flag is flown at half-mast and the Day of Mourning has spread to about 100 countries around the world.

1999: Vancouver police board announced a \$100,000 reward for tips to help in the search for 21 women missing from the city's poorest neighbourhood.

Dear Cara,

Although many women give their lives and many others are terribly traumatized by providing sexual services, they are generally not recognized by the Day of Mourning. Only in select literature are the “workplace” injuries of the exploited considered. They are not honoured because their cause is not honoured. Media coverage in the 1990s often spoke of child and teen “hookers” as if little children could somehow form the intent or desire to sell their own bodies.

Media reported eleven women dumped in rural areas around Edmonton:

Georgette Flint, age 20, found near Elk Island Park in September 1988.

Bernadette Ahenakew, age 22, found near Sherwood Park in October 1989.

Cara King, age 22, found in Sherwood Park in September 1997.

Kelly Dawn Reilly, age 23, found near Villeneuve in January 2001.

Edna Bernard, age 28, found near Leduc in September 2002.

Monique Pitrie, age 30, found near Fort Saskatchewan in January 2003.

Melissa Munch, age 20, found near Sherwood Park in January 2003.

Debbie Lake, age 29, found north of Camrose in April 2003.

Katie Ballantyne, age 40, found near Leduc in July 2003.

Rachel Quinney, age 19, found near Fort Saskatchewan in June 2004.

Charlene Gauld, age 20, found April 16, 2005.

Other women did not have a reported link with "high risk" life styles. For example, Joyce Hewitt was found weeks after you in the fall of 1997 but disappeared from continuing coverage. No resolution was reported in the following 16 cases and I'm sure there are more:

Melody Riegel, age 21, found in Edmonton in September 1986.

Melissa Letain, age 24, found southwest of Edmonton in February 1987.

Mavis Mason, age 29, found west of Edmonton in October 1990.

Lorraine Wray, age 46, found strangled in Edmonton in December 1990.

Marlene Morawski, age 35, found near Wabamun in September 1991.

Cassandra Francis, age 21, found in a ravine in west Edmonton in July 1992.

Elena Ross, age 25, found in Edmonton in February 1993.

Michelle Harmer, age 29, disappeared November 1995.

Jessica Marie Cardinal, age 24, found in an Edmonton alley in June 1997.

Joyce Hewitt, age 22, found near Sherwood Park in October 1997.

Mary Rose Thunder, age 34, found in Edmonton in February 1999.

Deanna Bellerose, age 29, reported missing September 2002.

Unidentified woman, age 25-35, found in North Saskatchewan River April 2003.

Corrie Ottenbriet, age 27, reported missing May 2004.

Cheryl Lynn Black, age 46, found in dumpster in Edmonton in May 2004.

Samantha Berg, age 19, found in north Edmonton in January 2005.

And so it goes. For all who are reported, many more disappear from their families, and unfortunately, from public consciousness. Somebody somewhere must know something that can help the various police departments solve these cases.

April 29: Case revisited

“Case revisited: New technology to be used on 30-year-old murder. It was a murder so horrific that during city police Detective Ron Johnson’s recruit training over two decades ago, he wondered if becoming a cop was the right career move.”

The Edmonton Sun, April 24, 2005

2009: **Jessica Martel**, age 26, mother of three, died from strangulation, blunt force trauma, and stab wounds in her Morinville home west of Edmonton. She worked as a waitress at a restaurant in town and was remembered as always being happy. Her common-law husband later admitted to killing her and pled guilty to second-degree murder. He apparently “just snapped” after she told him she was leaving their relationship.

2017: **Chantelle Hole**, age 25, was found dead in a rural home near Smith northeast of Edmonton. A man, reportedly her boyfriend, was charged with second-degree murder. Further details were not released.

Dear Cara,

2005: The shocking death of **Karen Ewanciw** thirty years ago (See April 24) brought back troubling thoughts. You were not quite four months old when Karen died. We had moved briefly to an awful apartment closer to her home. Being a miserable landlord does not make one a murder suspect but I was never comfortable around that man. He too died later. I was much happier when we moved further away. Your daycare was still in the area and when you were

older; we used to ride our bikes along the trail on top of the riverbank. I remember looking down into the bush, wondering which path was the scene of Karen's premature death.

Years later I met another woman who lived near us in a house where she had been sexually assaulted by her father and his friends. I was bothered to have been unaware of the terrible exploitation occurring so close to my block. How many more children are victimized in every city of the world with neighbours not knowing?

2005: A powerful letter from Maureen Collins, then executive director of Edmonton John Howard Society, appeared in the *Edmonton Journal*. An excerpt follows:

"...There are too many children and youth in our city, boys as well as girls, who are at risk today.

We should have all cried out, 'How did we, as a community, fail Gauld and her family?' We should be outraged and angry. We should not simply blame the police for not catching the killer or killers. We should not blame her family.

We should only be angry at the perpetrators of the violence that Gauld and other youths at risk experience daily. The perpetrators of violence include those who lure youths into the drug culture and addiction, those who teach them that prostitution and crime are easy ways to financially support an addiction, those who physically and sexually assault young people on the street, and finally those who murder them."

April 30: Music of life

The music of life plays in each soul. You seemed to march to your own drummer.
I wonder what you heard from the music in your heart.

Dear Cara,

1980: You were old enough to attend on-site kindergarten your second year at daycare but staff felt you were not ready to participate. They also said you naturally gravitated toward a younger play group. That made an easy decision for me. My sister had a December birthday

and always felt disadvantaged by being sent to school “early.” The next year you moved to an after-school care facility and started kindergarten in a regular classroom.

One of your favorite activities was drawing pictures and having someone write your stories on the pages. Your father was an artist and I liked to write so I was delighted to see your combined interests. These are two of the stories I saved:

“Once upon a time there was Santa Claus riding on his reindeer and one day he gave toys to all the good girls and good boys. One girl opened a present. She saw a doll. She hugged it and took it to bed and Santa Claus went to the North Pole. And Rudolph glowed his nose in the dark. The End”

“Little Red Riding Hood had some goodies. She walked in the woods. She met a wolf. The wolf said, “Glad to meet you.” The wolf captured Granny. Little Red Riding Hood gave her goodies to Granny and the wolf and waved good-bye. Her mother went to the house and captured the wolf. The End.”

I suppose you saw me as someone who could capture wolves.

On the other hand, your ballet teacher said you didn’t seem to hear the music. You attended lessons with Michelle next door as her mom was off work earlier and offered to take the two of you together. You were so cute in your little blue body suit with pink tights and slippers.

2005: Will and I attended dinner theatre with work colleagues and their partners. One petite and poised woman taught English at a community college and had a captivating manner of speaking. I was amused when she asked another guest if he was first or second tenor. She probably could not imagine a world such as mine where I’d never heard, nor cared about, the difference between a first and second tenor.

When she asked Will what he was, I replied he fiddled rather than sang. That led to a more balanced conversation about her son, a musical protégé who wanted to play violin even before his second birthday. One never knows how others perceive the world. I was totally amazed by your grade three music teacher who taught your class to play violin.

As the months of spring continue to grow warm with sunshine and spring rain refreshes the earth, we rejoice in the promise of new life.

May 1: Apache Blessing

May the Sun bring you new energy by day.
May the Moon softly restore you by night.
May the rain wash away your worries.
May the breeze blow strength into your being.
May you walk gently through the world
and know its beauty all the days of your life.

The Great Mystery Wakan Tanka

Dear little Cara,

1980: My single parenting phase lasted six years and I continued to learn about relationships with some of the men I dated. Long before social media, there were “personal ads” in the newspapers. I experimented with that venue and thought I was being discretionary. Several encounters ended with the first meeting. My “dumper/dumpee” ratio was reasonably balanced. Several times I declined further invitations after an introductory phone call and other times, gentlemen I hoped might call again did not. A couple fellows maintained friendships over the years and other hopeful relationships did not develop.

Two men neglected to mention they were married. The first was scary in that I found out later he used an alias. The first hint of his double identity was when we ran into him at the mall, children in tow, in a Santa Claus line-up. I drove around until I recognized his car, wrote down his license, and tracked his real name. The silly fool lived in my neighbourhood. Another time I spotted him hiding behind a pillar at a school sports event and later, through serendipitous circumstances, learned he was a sex addict. I was naïve, he was always charming, claimed to work out of town a lot, and I could just as easily have been dead.

Another was even more intriguing - tall, dark, handsome, and brilliant. I was smitten and our work overlapped so we could have met by chance. He hummed and hawed when I asked directly about his marital status. "That's usually not a hard question," I insisted. He admitted he had a wife and two young children. His work took him to different locations over irregular hours so it was not difficult to meet for lunch and/or intimate encounters. Interestingly, another male friend encouraged me to "follow my heart," advice I would never give or follow in retrospect.

May 2: Shifting routines

"In life, you will realize there is a role for everyone you meet. Some will test you. Some will use you. Some will love you and some will teach you. But the ones who are truly important are the ones who bring out the best in you. They are the rare and amazing people who remind you why it's all worth it." Positive Energy (Facebook quote)

Dear Cara,

1980: You started kindergarten at the age of six. One of the after-school staff thought you slept too much in the afternoon but it was because you had a hard time shifting from the long naps that were part of daycare routine. You sometimes asked why you were always the oldest in class although it seemed an appropriate peer group. Little Chip, who would later become your step-brother, was your friend both in class and at after-school care. I met his dad, Block, when we both joined the after-school Board.

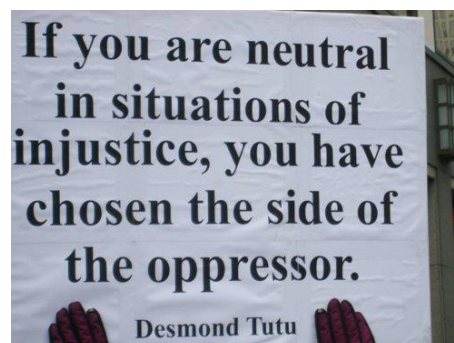
1982: You were in grade one when we moved in with Block and things were wonderful at first. Block and I were both single parents with similar-aged children and seemed to have compatible values and lifestyle. Chip's brother Buddy was three years older with an easy-going personality and good sense of humour. They were both very shy the first time we came for a visit but you all bonded well together.

One evening Block and I spent a couple hours dancing around the living room with you and Chip. His teacher found it quite amusing the next day when little Chip said he was tired from dancing all night. Life was more fun in the beginning.

Our friends initially thought Block and I were good for each other. Block was supportive when you children were younger, although he became more controlling and rigid as you entered adolescence. He reacted defensively to independent thinking and anyone who dared question his expectations. One of the clues I missed shortly after we began dating was when the after-school director asked me if I could talk to Block about getting more clothes for Buddy. Poor Buddy had only one pair of too tight pants. I don't know why Block was so stingy about clothing.

Another sign I overlooked was when his niece came for a visit. He seemed proud to introduce me but suddenly wrestled me to the floor. I will never know what that show of physicality was all about. Unfortunately, there were a few more incidents over the years, each a little different but far enough apart that I made excuses.

There were other traits of narcissism I did not recognize at the time. Years later an article on narcissism (tearsandhealing.com) provided shocking insight and clarity: "Narcissists will do anything, including brutalizing their own family, to maintain their own feeling that others see them as without any flaws... They also spin our reality to make theirs less painful." My attraction to his apparent self-confidence faded as he became both domineering and belligerent.



May 3: Moments in time

1983: **Shelley-Ann Bacsu**, age 16, disappeared near Hinton, Alberta, as she walked along the highway to her home. Some of her clothing was found near the Athabasca River but her body was never recovered. Her case is still unsolved.

2012: **Savannah Morin**, age 20, was fatally stabbed at a downtown Edmonton apartment. A man was later charged with second-degree murder.

2016: **Sabrina Papin**, age 27, mother of three daughters, died from gunshot wounds in Edmonton. Two men were later charged.

Dear Cara,

2005: It was good to be home again in a clean and tidy house after a visit to Grandma Hoarder. Road trips wear me out, as does dealing with her mess. Will and I spent a restless night on a blow-up air mattress on her floor with a blanket not quite big enough to cover us both.

A busy morning was spent helping Grandma prepare for her upcoming 80th birthday party. We previewed the rented hall, shopped for supplies, stashed them away, and even had time to help her shop for a new outfit.

Will thought I was too hard on poor Grandma regarding her hoarding. “She had always been that way, always will be, obviously doesn’t mind, and has done reasonably well for herself” were his arguments. But he hadn’t lived with messiness all of his life.

I appeared on evening Global News as part of J’lyn Nye’s production on murdered women. The show mentioned a reporter’s surprise when he went to Charlene Gauld’s home and a nice-looking gentleman answered the door. The reporter thought he had the wrong address and Charlene’s dad said simply, “No, she came from a good family.” Although girls are picked to die because they are vulnerable, many parents try hard to rescue them.

I remember attending a parent-teacher interview for you in high school when your teacher literally staggered backwards when I introduced myself. “What’s the matter?” I asked, “You weren’t expecting someone normal?”

May 4: Stolen children, stolen families

“No one, no child, no family is safe. A pimp doesn’t care...”

Dear Cara,

2000: The first global conference on sexual exploitation “From Answers to Action” was held in Edmonton May 4-6. Organized by a number of service agencies, the conference was a milestone in addressing issues around prostitution, sexual addiction, and sexual exploitation.

A newsletter *Connecting Voices – Creating Choices* (May 2000) was published for the conference. “A mom in rural Alberta” contributed an article:

Stolen Children, Stolen Families

“We were a typical Canadian family, living in the rural prairies. My husband is an engineer and I am a childcare worker. We consider ourselves to be quite intelligent and very responsible parents. Our children always came first! Living on an acreage provided our family with a safe and healthy environment, allowing our children to grow into the adults we always hoped for.

We never even thought about child prostitution. They came from dysfunctional homes or the inner city. Nothing like that could affect our family. After all, we were raising our kids in the country, doing hockey, soccer and figure skating. In retrospect, we were totally ignorant of the fact that pimps roam middle-upper class neighborhoods and schools looking to recruit young girls into their grasp.

Our perfect little world, with our perfect little family, suddenly came to a horrendous crash. We lost our daughter to child prostitution when she was only 15 years old. How could this have happened? This was not a part of the plan! We don’t live downtown on skid row. We are educated; how could we have known?

The nightmare began two long years ago when a young man, who befriended and earned her trust, coerced our daughter. Within six months, he had gained control of her. A former honors student, her marks slid, she pushed us away and denied our love for her. We lost our little girl to something, but we did not know how, or to what, or to whom.

For the next two years we experienced sheer pain and hell. We searched for her, as did the police and Child Find. After two long years of fighting for our daughter's survival, we know where she is and that she is alive! But it took perseverance, getting into social workers' faces, phoning MLAs, and not taking "No" for an answer.

No one, no child, no family is safe. A pimp does not care what your financial status or what neighborhood he is seeking his next "girl" from. To him, she is just his next meal ticket, fresh meat to market, earning \$168,000 per year selling your child's body.

Next time you hear about children involved in prostitution, don't make that fatal mistake of believing that it does not happen to families and neighborhoods like yours, because it does, and it did."

I made my own debut at the time, writing under a pseudonym, not quite ready to go public, but beginning to explore what went wrong. It was partly magical thinking – if I blamed myself or if I had known what to do differently, then maybe history could change and you would still be here. Instead, I now hope to help save others.

May 5: National Day of Awareness for MMIW

The outreach agency sent flowers after your body was found.

Dear Cara,

2000: The "From Answers to Action" conference included a break-out session entitled "Prostitution: How it Affects the Family." This was my first public appearance:

A Parent's Perspective

"My daughter first disappeared at age 16, towards the end of grade 10, after a move I unwittingly supported... She wanted to stay with a new young woman friend who lived just a couple blocks away and she promised to continue going to school. I agreed to let her try.

A few days later I was unable to contact her and received a message on my answering machine that she was "working" downtown. I drove around town looking

for her – during the day. I was afraid to go at night. I phoned an outreach agency several times. My calls were never returned. That was 1991. Hopefully it would be different today.

Feelings: Shock, denial, disbelief, confusion, helplessness.

What I needed: Concrete support and direction.

Fortunately her step-brother and friends took matters into their own hands, found her one night, rescued her, and brought her home. We endured a few weeks of intrusive calls, people inviting her to Vancouver, ringing the doorbell at strange hours, and surrounding the apartment building before the harassment passed. Thankfully it did.

Feelings and Needs: As above. I didn't know how to talk to her and she didn't want to talk to me. I found out later the outreach agency had been in contact with her. A follow-up call with referral for debriefing and specialized counselling would have been helpful.

We carried on. She returned to school and started to hang out with musicians, travelling with a band one summer. She became more immersed in a world of partying and increasingly irresponsible with friends she brought home to the point I did not feel safe in my own apartment.”

May 6: Blended family

2005: The badly decomposed body of **Ellie May Meyer**, age 33, mother of two, was found in a field south of Fort Saskatchewan, an area where five other women were dumped in the previous eight years. The *Edmonton Journal* reported twelve bodies in 16 years. Ellie was described as a street smart woman who worked in Edmonton since 1989; attempts to get off the street were defeated by her addictions. She was last seen a month earlier.

Hello again, my Cara,

1983: Block and I continued with the blending process – two households of furniture and two sets of children - and I was optimistic the move would be good for all of us. You made us a card at school, a heart with two heads and the words, “A friend is good and friendly.” I took that as a positive sign.

We were busy enough that each child was allowed only one extra-curricular activity. Yours was gymnastics. I remember you, with uncharacteristic perseverance, throwing yourself toward the ground over and over until you mastered cartwheels. You also loved the trampoline and eagerly participated in helping earn money to buy one for home. Block spray-painted a mark in the center to help keep jumpers on target. One day after practising flips, you commented, “I knew I was in trouble when I looked down and all I could see was bush.” Fortunately, in spite of your escapades and the trampoline being a hit with your friends, there were no serious injuries.

Sometimes I wonder if I was too hard on you kids with chores. Really, it seemed like the only way we could manage. You each had revolving responsibilities around supper, one setting the table, one loading the dishwasher, one vacuuming the floor, etc. You shared weekly cleaning duties by being responsible for your own room and another area of the house. I paid extra allowance for the weekly chores but once the trampoline was “earned,” I hired outside help. That was easier than being frustrated about standards of cleanliness.

One thing I learned about myself is that weekends went more smoothly if I came home to a clean house towards the end of the week. I did insist on token tidiness in your rooms at least once a week, the prerequisite for your allowance.

A warning sign might have been Block’s and my inherent disrespect for each other’s vocational orientation. Block never thought he would end up with a “bloody social worker” and I never thought I’d be involved with “management.” I often felt stretched to the limit by the demands of work and family. That too was the beginning of a crack.

May 7: Another body found

Media descends on family members.

2006: The body of **Theresa Marie Innes**, age 36, was found stuffed in a hockey bag in Fort Saskatchewan. She was last seen in High Level on August 7, 2005. Thomas Svekla was later charged and convicted of second-degree murder.

Dear Cara,

2005: It happened again. A body was found last night, by a farmer tilling his field. The discovery was north of Sherwood Park, a few miles from where you were found eight years ago.

Pat was the first to phone. Her daughter, Kelly, was found four years ago in a gravel pit. The *Edmonton Sun* had already spoken with her. Pat said spring was her least favourite season because it's when bodies are found. A University of Alberta sociologist reportedly agreed it was a likely time. However, he added it was possible that copycat killers were using a common dumping ground. Lynn also called. Her daughter, Georgette, age 20, was found in 1988, 17 years ago, near Elk Island Park east of Sherwood Park. (See September 13.)

I caught the news on several channels. All had more or less the same story.

I planned to clean all day but Will invited the family over for a fire pit so I accomplished only half of what I intended. Life goes on and we must pay attention to the living. The grand-boys arrived in the morning and stayed all day, playing outside and helping their Grandpa. They are high energy boys. I enjoy them for the most part but have low tolerance for what seems to be continual fighting. Although it starts as fun, someone inevitably gets hurt and play turns into revenge. Will handles it by threatening to send them home.

When you and your step-brothers were younger, we had a rule about "unnecessary violence." Anyone deemed to be out of line had to do the chores of the injured party the next day as well as their own. It seemed we seldom had to enforce it.

May 8: Is Mother's Day more difficult now?

1945: VE-Day was the end of the war in Europe. More than one million Canadian men and women enlisted for battle in the war now long over, that ended before I was born, the carnage and horror relegated to history books and documentaries.

Dear Cara,

1992: My friend found me a replica hot air balloon at a garage sale. It was constructed from fixed wire and stood about 18 inches high, a symbol of my dreams and visions.

2005: My first few hours of the day were dedicated to relaxing. In the rest of Canada, celebrations were held for the 60th anniversary of VE day, the surrender of German Nazi army to Allied forces in Holland, marking the end of the Second World War. More than one million Canadians lost their lives in the war. That is incomprehensible for those for us who have been born since and are devastated by even one death.

In current news, Romeo Dallaire supported a bill to provide health and social service benefits for modern day veterans such as himself. A veterans' charter, introduced last month to replace the old one of 1943, was hailed at the most progressive legislation since the Second World War. It intended to give a new generation of Canadian Forces access to better health care and psychological counselling after serving overseas and leaving the military. There seems to be at least token recognition that people can be traumatized by the atrocities of war.

One media call came from Esther Kim at A-Channel, and I agreed to do a quick interview for the evening news. Will referred to the media as buzzing around like flies, caring only when they can get a story. He was annoyed she and her photographer showed up in a marked van. I too often wonder if any of this would help but it seems someone must carry the story forward.

Esther asked if Mother's Day is more difficult now. That's like, "So, do you find it more difficult to walk with a leg missing?" The difference is profound and permanent, a continual

challenge to find new ways to cope and carry on. As fate would have it, we were invited for supper and watched the show with relatives of *Samantha Berg* whose body had been found in January. What were the chances of two families coming together, touched by similar tragedies?

May 9: More media calls

2004: **Corrie Renee Ottenbreit**, age 27, was last seen in downtown Edmonton. Her disappearance was later registered with RCMP Project KARE.

Dear Cara,

2005: I had a steady day, punctuated by one media call and a message from Kate that the body found was not one of two young ladies recently listed as missing. The latest victim was a 33-year-old woman with family in B.C. and Quebec. Her name was to be released after her family was notified. No plans were yet made for a memorial.

A further call was received from Brian Bergman, Calgary Bureau Chief from *Maclean's* magazine. He astutely found me through Google and was planning an in-depth feature on the Edmonton murders. He obligingly came to Edmonton tonight for an interview as I indicated that would be preferable to tomorrow.

Let's see, what did we talk about? As usual, he asked about you as a little girl. What were you like and when did difficulties begin? We talked about your impulsiveness, your limitations, your love of adventure, your struggles with drugs and mental illness, your difficulty maintaining a residence, and your resultant homelessness.

He also asked what I knew about your street involvement and when I first found out. That question is always difficult because I really don't know much of what you experienced. You didn't want to tell me and I don't know what I would have done with more information had I known. The power of denial is strong, especially when we feel helpless.

Brian asked about when you went missing and I recalled that was the worst month of my life. I still can't imagine how I would have managed if more time had passed without knowing, like many other mothers around the world.

We talked about my involvements since your death. I admitted it was a relief to know you would no longer suffer. I used to wonder what could help turn your life around. I couldn't imagine you being gainfully employed; nor could I imagine you being a parent, although I feared that might eventually happen.



May 10: A trial 12 years later

It is a shame that so many of the women's bodies are found in states of decomposition so long after they disappear. That was something I talked about with Brian Bergman yesterday, how I wished the police would take investigations of missing women more seriously. One would think the designation of "high risk" would add to credibility rather than detract from it when they disappear.

Dear Cara,

2005: In city court news a 42-year-old man named Clifford Sleigh was on trial for murdering 6-year-old *Corrine "Punky" Gustavson* September 6, 1992. The case, kept alive in the media for years, was finally solved with more sophisticated DNA testing. New tests uncovered sperm on the little girl's panties which matched the DNA profile of the accused.

Sleigh pled guilty to kidnapping and manslaughter, admitting he abducted the child, sexually assaulted her, caused her death, and abandoned her in an isolated trucking yard. Prosecutors refused a reduced plea and proceeded with charges of murder and aggravated sexual assault. The coroner reported smothering and genital trauma contributed to Corrine's death.

It's impossible to fathom what would cause a grown man to hurt a child in that way. It was reassuring that good detective work paid off, even though it was twelve years later. It is equally incomprehensible that friends and family of the accused would lie, providing an alibi for this murderer for so many years. I hope they will be held accountable for obstruction of justice.

May 11: Remand Center

2004: **Elaine Frieda Alook**, age 35, mother of four sons, was last seen by her family when one of her brothers drove her to Fort McMurray from their parent's home in Anzac. All of her belongings were left behind and her bank account untouched. Elaine was described as talkative and friendly with an outgoing personality.

Dear Cara,

1992: You, then age 17, brought home a stack of binders to show me you really were trying at school.

2005: Part of my work agenda was a tour of the Remand Center, where accused are held pending trial when they're refused bail. We saw the security rooms, the cells, the community rooms, the exercise areas, the holding "tanks" for people awaiting transport to various other areas, the kitchen, the medical rooms, the visiting rooms, closed circuit TV court, etc. It was a world unto itself, incomprehensible to most outsiders.

It was particularly poignant for me to see the women's cellblock, home for you several times as a young adult. Ironically, some of our best phone calls happened when you were there

clean from drugs and rested, your only distraction chatting with other ladies in the background, bartering food trades. I never did visit because I couldn't bring myself to go through the process. You never stayed long and obviously had liberal access to the phone. I saw the bunk where you might have slept, the tables where you would have eaten.

When I spoke with Brian Bergman from *Maclean's*, I mentioned a news flash the other day about a march in Winnipeg commemorating five hundred missing women. There was no follow-up at the time. It reminded me of Warren Goulding's book, *Just Another Indian*, where he reported nearly as many women reported missing in the three years prior to 1994. Were these the same or different women?

It was incomprehensible that so many could disappear without more attention being paid. Was it their nationality? Their lifestyle? Did police simply note their names and wait for bodies as I was told would happen when you went missing? Or were their names even noted? What if there had been 500 missing accountants or nurses or teachers? I needed to understand more about what is happening.

May 12: When is life over?

There was no need for artificial life support.

Dear Cara,

1984: You were nine years old and in grade three. You and Chip wanted the same teacher and luckily you were both chosen for her classroom. You happened to be in different rooms for grades one and two, which I liked because you could not report on each other. I was torn about grade three, didn't want either of you disappointed, and decided not to intervene. Fate prevailed and you were both happy.

Buddy asked me to attend spring Carnival with him. Although I was technically his step-mother, he and I were more like comrades when we all lived together. Carnival was a big event at your school, a celebration of French-Canadian culture as part of the bilingual program. Buddy said no one had ever been to Carnival with him the whole time he attended. So I took the day off work and accompanied him to school for the day. He would have been in grade six that year. Block, of course, thought his work was too important to ever miss a day. Even when his mother came to visit, I took time from my work to take her shopping.

I attended the next two Carnivals with you and Chip, except for the last year when you were in grade six and I had to be in Calgary for classes. I felt terrible that I didn't even know Chip was crowned Carnival King until I read it later in the paper. Neither of you mentioned that it was to happen. Chip was always quiet about his needs and Block would have been too busy with his job to notice. What a tragedy that we lived in such insular worlds. It was a vindication of sorts for me that Buddy didn't speak to Block for years after I left. My regret is that I did not better protect all of you children from him.

2005: A damper on an otherwise wonderful evening with visiting cousins, celebrating the English connection on my father's side, was a call to Will that his mother had taken ill and suffered a heart attack in the ambulance on her way to hospital. Someone asked if he wanted her kept alive until he arrived. He said no, keeping her on artificial life support was not necessary.

May 13: The end of a generation

2004: **Delores Dawn Brower**, age 33, mother of one son, was last seen. Her disappearance was registered with RCMP Project KARE eighteen months later on October 20, 2005. Her remains were found April 25, 2015, near Leduc.

My Cara,

2005: Will's mother, known to many simply as "Gramma" passed away early this morning in Manitoba. Time turns in mysterious ways. As we waited for further word and contemplated options, Will talked to his children and checked flights. We spent an hour doing laundry and packing, and still found ourselves unable to sleep before leaving for the airport.

I thought I might catch a couple hours sleep after I got home but spent all morning on the phone. I called the children again, along with some of my family members, and my workplace to let them know I would be re-arranging my schedule. I managed to contact or leave a message for all of my clients, researched flights for myself, finished cutting fruit for tomorrow, and was gratefully in bed by 10 p.m. I don't even remember my head touching the pillow.

May 14: Grandma's 80th birthday party

"Been there, done that, can't remember"

Cara, my love,

2005: Back in Alberta, life continued and demanded celebration. I was up early to drive with Auntie Grace to Vermilion to get ready for our mother's 80th birthday party, held a month late at her request in hopes the weather would be warmer.

Letters of congratulations were read, entertainment provided by chosen grandchildren and the fashion show went well. We all mark the milestones of our life in different ways. Grandma chose to depict hers with a fashion show of memorable outfits she had worn or designed over the years. She started with a blue gown chosen for her graduation from "normal school" (a preliminary teacher's college) and her older sister's wedding in 1944. The blue gown and her wedding dress from 1947 were modeled by granddaughters. Grandma prided herself on weighing less than 100 pounds through most of her adult years.

Next came some original designs, first a red-and-white dress created for the 1967 Canadian centennial, followed by outfits made for Auntie Grace when she was competing for Carnival Queen in high school. Grace's wedding dress from 1976 was modeled by her daughter.

A poncho was reminiscent of her and Grandpa's trips to Disneyland and Mexico in 1979. Special T-shirts depicted the 1988 Seniors Games, trips to Hawaii in 1991 and 1994, and their 1997 Alaska cruise. "Been There, Done That, Can't Remember" shirts were from her and Grandpa's 50th Anniversary. Uncle Al wore his specially designed tartan vest.

Many Halloween creations were modeled and the finale was her Elvis costume worn by Uncle Hippy. It was really quite amazing, an elaborate white satin pantsuit fashioned after Elvis' last tour and topped off with a dark wig I found at a garage sale. It was Grandma's day and she enjoyed showing off her handiwork.

May 15: Five words?

1999: **Catherine Ann Burrell**, age 41, was last seen in Edmonton. A man turned himself in to police on February 14, 2002, in Calgary and was charged with her murder although Catherine's body was never found.

2009: **Violet Marie Heathen**, age 49, was last seen outside the same Lloydminster hotel as **Jeanette Chief** who disappeared two years earlier. Both women were from Onion Lake First Nation. Violet's remains were found by a hunter six months later. A 59-year-old Red Deer man was charged with both murders in March 2016.

Dear Cara,

2005: Once again I was up early, this time to take myself to the airport. Grandma's party was over and it was time to turn my attention again to the more serious task of Will's mother's funeral. With every passing come reflections of times I missed with you.

The flight was uneventful. Will met me at the airport. Neighbours had dropped off a bountiful supply of fresh sandwiches for lunch, which were greatly appreciated. In the afternoon

we met with the minister about the order of service for the funeral. He asked us to think of five words to describe Gramma so that started a flow of stories.

Words included “generous,” “hospitable,” “gracious,” “genuinely interested and caring.” Gramma always asked about what we were doing and remembered details to check another time. Her hospitality was legendary. She always had lunch ready when we arrived, her house was full of treats, and she prepared meals for multitudes with seemingly little effort. She delighted in the arrival of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren and always remembered their birthdays.

I often remarked to Will that his mother knew more about my life than my own, simply because she asked. Hers was a wonderful example of life lived selflessly and graciously.

May 16: MMIW estimated at 500?

2005: *Winnipeg Free Press* reported the federal government was to announce a \$5 million spending budget to help reduce the ranks of murdered and missing Indigenous women, estimated to be 500 at the time. Hmm, that would be \$10,000 each. One can only hope such an amount might prevent further deaths.

2006: The body of **Bonnie Lynn Jack**, age 37, mother of six, was found in a lightly wooded area near a farmer’s field south of Fort Saskatchewan. A friend described her as “always joking and laughing, a beautiful person, kind and soft-spoken.”

Dear Cara,

2005: Funeral preparations continued with Will’s family for their beloved mother. The difference with a “natural” death within a “normal” family is that there are no media hovering for a response, no worry that the deceased would be disrespected by headlines about her lifestyle, no photographers waiting for a show of vulnerability or emotion, no police waiting to take statements or tracking mourners, no comparison about how many others had suffered similar deaths in what timelines, no speculation as to the date and cause of death, no wonder about who

was responsible and if or when charges would be laid. There was incredible sadness, of course, at the loss of a life well lived and a gracious presence taken from our midst.

We spent time at Gramma's apartment sorting some of her belongings to share as keepsakes. Photos previously given were returned to their original owners. I chose her desk lamp for inspiration. It remains on my night stand years later to remind me of the light she shone for her family. Others chose her crib-board, tea cups, serving bowls, Christmas ornaments, and other personal items, all symbols of the memories held in our hearts.

May 17: Every death brings new memories

2005: **The *Winnipeg Free Press* referred to 500 aboriginal women across the country who had gone missing or whose murders remain unsolved in the past 20 years.** In Manitoba, 51 names were on the list. It was not clear who compiled the list.

A report released last year by Amnesty International suggested that racism or sexism were factors hampering police investigations of missing or murdered native women. The good news was that the federal government plans to spend money over a five-year plan to help reduce the figures. The Native Women's Association of Canada planned to gather case histories on the women to identify trends for intervention.

Dear Cara,

1985: You were ten years old and in grade four. You and the boys all wanted a pet. Block refused to get a dog because he said Buddy had been irresponsible when he was younger. Golly, he was only nine when I met him so I'm not sure what was expected of him earlier. Somehow I prevailed and we owned a cat for a while. The first was a big old farm cat not suitable for urban indoor living. He preferred being outside and did not like to cuddle. I'm not sure if we gave him back or if he ran away. You kids named him "Fonz" after his grey coat.

Then we acquired "little Fonzie," a grey kitten barely weaned. He grew up doted on by all of you, chewing on your shirts while you watched TV. He grew only to medium size and we used

to leave him outside during the day to play with his friends in the neighbourhood. One sight I will never forget is that silly cat running down the street following our car when he heard us coming home after work. Unfortunately, Buddy developed terrible allergies and after a couple years of treating him for respiratory ailments, we decided we had to let little Fonzie go.

About that time you finally had the opportunity to learn to ride. Grandpa John was understandably reluctant to let you ride his horses at the farm without more experience. I was fortunate to find a riding camp which you and two friends attended for a couple of summers. That led to your participation in several local parades and later riding lessons back in the city.

May 18: Celebration of life

1984: **Carolyn Pruser**, age 18, went missing near Peace River. She was driving in her parents' car on a gravel road leading to her home when she apparently stopped to talk to someone. The vehicle was found but her disappearance is still unsolved.

2004: **Daleen Kay Muskego Bosse**, age 25, married with one daughter, was last seen in Saskatoon where she was an education student at the University of Saskatchewan. Four years later a man confessed to strangling her and burning her body. He led police to her remains and was convicted of second-degree murder in 2014. (See August 11.)

2004: The body of a homeless woman, burned beyond recognition, was found in an Edmonton dumpster. She was identified three months later as **Cheryl Lynn Black**, age 46, originally from the Siksika First Nation west of Calgary. She was believed to have lived in Edmonton about a year and made money picking bottles.

Dear Cara,

2005: Today was Gramma's funeral service. Her memory card pictured a wheat field as she used to enjoy looking at the crops. Someone commented, "The only thing that would make it more complete would be a cow in the field."

Four grandchildren presented very moving anecdotes of their memories. One recalled Gramma's delight with all her great-grandchildren and the interest she took in all their activities.

Another remembered building bird-nests as a small child and her sharing his surprise the next morning when eggs appeared. She had the ability to let each grandchild believe they were her favourite. One grandson spoke of Gramma as the focal point of her children's families. He also remembered her saying each night that she would awaken "when the good Lord called her." Another paid tribute to two distinct phases – first, her part of inseparable team of "Gramma and Grandpa" and secondly, the invincible woman who managed alone for many years.

Light rain fell as the heavens shared our sorrow, then cleared for the graveyard service. Her children made an evening visit to ensure the grave was looked after. As we drove away, we saw two deer grazing in the field, as if Gramma and Grandpa were together again.

May 19: Changing expectations

2005 Headline "Queen Honours Fallen Mounties." During her visit to Alberta, Queen Elizabeth met with the families of the four RCMP officers killed.

2005: Edmonton toddler **Alexis Marie Grant**, age 14 months, was beaten to death by her mother's boyfriend who was babysitting.

Dear Cara,

1986: You were eleven years old and in grade five. That year I too returned to school, travelling weekly to Calgary for a 20-hour day plus two and a half days of practicum in Edmonton. I was fortunate to receive a monthly research bursary from the university so our family was not as financially strapped as I feared we might be.

I often wonder "when did it start?" and one answer is "maybe grade five." You must have had challenges with homework so one requirement was a note signed by your teacher each Friday confirming you had completed your assignments before the weekend. Among my memorabilia is a cryptic note from you:

“I did my homework. I did my chores. I have my homework book on the table. I read 15 mins for Social Studies. I read about Rocks in that space book. Please don’t bother me unless it is important.”

There is also a letter to your teacher and principal apologizing for swearing and writing a “nasty letter” with your girlfriend that was sent to a male student. I forget the details.

I give Block credit for supporting my year of study although he often commented there was more to his life than “being the partner of a grad student.” Although I was studying to be a better social worker, ironically my personal stress increased and our home life suffered.

That summer we made an exploratory trip to Nova Scotia. Block often spoke of moving back and after his father died, it seemed an opportune time for him to be closer to his mother.

May 20: Memorial rally

“Just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects.”

Dalai Lama

Dear Cara,

1987: Block always needed to define himself and his sons in terms of excellence or achievement. His Christmas letter claimed that “Buddy, of course, understands computer language much better than the rest of us” and “is the top scorer on his hockey team.” Chip was taking Tae Kwan Do and “the concentration and discipline required are great and the self-confidence it builds well worth the effort.”

2005: In Edmonton, friends of *Ellie May Meyer* gathered at Winston Churchill Square to attend a memorial rally for her and other murdered women. Ellie May’s body was found east of Edmonton on May 6. She was 33 years old. One of her friends remembered, “She was a beautiful person, inside and outside. She was a really good friend. She would give you the shirt off her back if she could.”

In Medicine Wheel tradition, Corn Planting Moon brings qualities of strength and consistency. It teaches inner beauty, balanced with caring for others and the environment, and calls forth healing and creativity.

May 21: Corn Planting Moon

2010: **Heather Rae Thurier**, age 23, mother of two, was shot in the face at a north-end Edmonton LRT station after a brief confrontation with a man who refused her requests for a cigarette. He was later found guilty of second-degree murder.

Dear Cara,

“Corn planting” is symbolic of world harvest. As much as I disliked the isolation of living on the farm as a child, I honour all who grow crops for the world and the brave men and women who settled our home land. There is no doubt, in my mind, that settlers had as much spiritual connection to the earth as the original Indigenous population. The difference is the hunter/gatherer trusts game and berries will be provided while the farmer trusts land can be tended and nurtured to provide crops.

The following tribute is credited to Paul Harvey, a radio broadcaster, in a 1978 speech given to the Future Farmers of America convention:

“And on the 8th day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, ‘I need a caretaker.’ So God made a Farmer.

God said, ‘I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper, then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board.’ So God made a Farmer.

‘I need somebody with arms strong enough to rustle a calf and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild; somebody to call hogs, tame cantankerous machinery, come home hungry, have to wait for lunch until his wife’s done feeding visiting ladies, then tell the ladies to be sure and come back real soon – and mean it.’ So God made a Farmer.

God said, ‘I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt, and watch it die, then dry his eyes and say, ‘Maybe next year.’ I need somebody who can shape an ax handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire, who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks and shoe scraps; who, planting time and

harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, and then pain'n from 'tractor back,' put in another seventy-two hours.' So God made a Farmer.

God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at double speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds, and yet stop in mid-field and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbor's place. So God made a Farmer.

God said, 'I need somebody strong enough to clear trees and heave bales, yet gentle enough to tame lambs and wean pigs and tend the pink-combed pullets, who will stop his mower for an hour to splint the broken leg of a meadow lark.'

It had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners; somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed and rake and disc and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder and finish a hard week's work with a five-mile drive to church; somebody who would bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh, and then sigh, and then reply with smiling eyes, when his son says that he wants to spend his life 'doing what dad does.' So God made a Farmer."

May 22: Mother's love never dies

2002: Robert Pickton was charged with murdering a seventh woman from the list of then 54 missing. She was **Brenda Ann Wolfe**, age 32, last seen in February 1999. Brenda was born in Pincher Creek and grew up near Calgary.

Dear Cara,

1992: I optimistically registered a consulting company as "Celebrate!" and signed \$1200 worth of post-dated payments for your orthodontic treatments.

1993: I dropped you off at the beauty salon for a perm. Later in the evening you made Rice Krispy squares. Normal evenings for us seemed few and far between.

2005: The *Edmonton Journal*, under the headline "Mother's Love Never Dies," told the lovely story of a dying mother who painstakingly wrote a series of notes for her daughters to be opened on milestones she knew she would miss. You will not be missing me at your future events but I will miss you at mine.

I can only imagine the milestones you might have had - ideally finding a suitable home, perhaps an employment opportunity with enough supports to keep you engaged, time with a caring partner - although the thought of future grandchildren scared me. Who might have helped you raise them if I was not able?

I never did develop my company and you didn't live to enjoy the benefits of completed orthodontics. Little did I know your dental records would be used to confirm your identity.

May 23: Lost, Luckless Girls

Your story was shared with Canada. I hope some good will come of it.

My darling little Cara,

2005: *Maclean's* magazine, with a cover picture of Queen Elizabeth, featured a story on the murdered women of Edmonton. The reporter was Brian Bergman:

Kathy King sat in the living room of her middle-class Edmonton home last week, reliving yet again the horror of losing a daughter to a serial killer, or killers, stalking the city... The body of yet another sex trade worker – at least the 13th such unsolved homicide or suspicious death since 1988 – had just been discovered in a farmer's field on the eastern outskirts of Edmonton, about 40 km away from where the remains of King's 22-year-old daughter, Caralyn, were found nearly eight years ago. "It's just too much," said King, 56. "The unrelenting repetition is very draining. It's frightening, because there's a subset of humanity out there that believes in killing vulnerable young women."

* * *

Even when not being stalked by a murderer, life [on the street] is often nasty, brutish and short. Dawn knows the territory well... There is very little transitional housing or support for those who want to leave the sex trade and who don't have a family to go back to. They have few options, which is why they continue to work the streets, even now. "There's tons of fear out there because you never know who is going to be next," [she] says. "But just because someone is out there killing people doesn't change the situations these women live with day-to-day. Like being homeless, being addicted, being controlled by a pimp or a gang. That's their reality and they often see no escape."

Interestingly, the next story in the magazine was about women in Pakistan still being sold like property and murdered for the so-called “honour” of their family. The underlying issues were similar: (1) women were treated as sexual property rather than full human beings with equal rights, and (2) the will for political change was lacking.

May 24: Major changes

“Stick with the people who pull the magic out of you and not the madness.”

One Fit Widow (May 2, 2017)

Dear Cara,

1987: You were 12 years old in grade six while I was finishing my MSW thesis. I ended up taking the bus to university each day to minimize distractions. The irony is that I was researching literature on the trauma of child sexual abuse, without realizing there were a number of other identity and developmental issues that were causing you to act out in similar ways.

Even though we missed the opportunity to visit the statue of Terry Fox on our trip across Canada, one of your favorite memories in Alberta was meeting Rick Hansen on his Man on Motion tour. Rick was born August 26, 1957, and a truck accident at age 15 left him a paraplegic. He was inspired by Terry and began his own project in 1985 to wheel around the world to raise money for spinal cord injuries. Your school arranged a field trip for students to accompany him a while on his way through Edmonton. “He had soft hands,” you remembered.

It’s interesting how friends find each other. When you were younger, I worried about the influence of one friend. Yet when we moved across the country, you found and befriended her clone. That made me realize how much people are drawn to each other by their common personalities. Of course, that attraction can also serve to enhance dynamics, for better or worse.

May 25: Missing Children's Day

1996: **Charmaine Louise Pidlesney**, age 22, was found murdered in the parking lot of the Empire Hotel in Edmonton. Her name appears on several sites with the notation "circumstances unavailable." Edmonton's first "john school" was held that same day.

Dear Cara,

2005: A poem by Edmonton poet Betty Nordin was read at the May 20 memorial for **Ellie May Meyer**. It is from her book *Wing Tips* (1999) published by *Songs of the Street*.

The Missing Girl

As she stands on the corner
She steps down to the curb
To the car as it pulls alongside her.
She asks the driver,
"Would you like to go out tonight?"
There is a pause and
Then she steps into the car.
The car speeds onto the long dark street.

I recall the look on her face.
It was on loneliness, fear and despair.
I wonder to myself,
"Will she make it back to the corner?
How many more times will she disappear into the night?"

All she wants is someone to hold her
To tell her that she is loved,
To take away her loneliness.
I think to myself,
"She's someone's daughter.
Where is her family?"

Later I find out the long lonely road
Will never end for her.
She has disappeared
And she is on an endless road
And will not return.

Tonight, there is another girl standing on the curb.

May 26: National Day of Healing and Reconciliation

Too many women have been murdered.

1967: **Mildred Batoche**, aka **Millie Wanchisco**, age 23, was last seen in Edmonton.

Dear Cara,

2005: The National Day of Healing and Reconciliation is a grassroots movement to heal our communities by addressing issues resulting from past injustices based on culture, religion, or race. Smudging is a way of bringing everyone together with a clean heart and mind, coming to the circle, and leaving all the negative thoughts behind. Healing is not solely an Indigenous issue as many minorities have suffered through government policy.

The National Day in Edmonton was celebrated at City Hall. Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute started the day to acknowledge our collective history of human rights violations. Marie Dunn, an Edmonton singer shared her song “You Can’t Take That Away” inspired by the Montreal Massacre. (See December 6.) Martin Garber-Conrad, new CEO of Edmonton Community Foundation declared, “Too many women have been murdered, too many women have died.”

A good news story is that Maggie Hodgson was one of 1000 Women later nominated as a group for the Nobel Peace Prize. Maggie, a First Nations activist, was chosen for her work in Aboriginal reconciliation, justice and healing initiative, and residential school issues. She was co-founder of the National Day of Healing and Reconciliation.

Memories that can’t be taken away include laughter shared, voices in the breeze, dancing in the sun, and the promise of happy new young faces. What if every time a spirit leaves, it simply dissolves back into Creation, its essence available to be absorbed and manifested again in new little people? Each new person is unique combination of infinite connections to those who have gone before.

May 27: More names added

2006: The body of **Elaine Rowan**, age 41, mother of four, was found in the Edmonton river valley by a homeless man collecting bottles. She was from Samson Cree First Nation south of the city. Elaine's death was not considered criminal, although it was not reported why she was in Edmonton.

2007: **Angel Edith Carlick**, age 19, was last seen in Whitehorse and found six months later in a shallow grave outside the city. Angel's mother Wendy became an advocate for missing and murdered women and was also killed ten years later. (See April 19.)

Dear Cara,

2005: In sobering news today twelve names were added to first-degree murder charges against Robert Pickton, the Port Coquitlam pig farmer accused of being Canada's worst serial killer. He has been in custody since his arrest on February 7, 2002. He was previously charged with 15 counts of murder involving women who disappeared from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside over several years. The Missing Women Task Force reportedly processed more than 100,000 DNA swabs and an estimated 40,000 pieces of forensic evidence since the investigation began. The latest murder victims to be named include:

Andrea Borhaven, born January 10, 1972, last seen in 1997 (age 27)

Wendy Lynn Crawford, born April 21, 1956, last seen November 1999 (age 44)

Sarah Jean Devries, born May 12, 1969, last seen April 14, 1998 (age 28)

Tiffany Louise Drew, born January 13, 1975, last seen December 31, 1999 (age 23)

Cara Ellis, missing in 1997

Cynthia Dawn Feliks, born December 12, 1954, last seen November 1997 (age 42)

Marnie Lee Frey, born August 30, 1973, last seen August 1997 (age 23)

Angela Rebecca Jardine, born June 23, 1971, last seen November 20, 1998 (age 27)

Debra Jones, born December 31, 1957, last seen December 21, 2000 (age 42)

Kerry Lynn Koski, born August 14, 1959, last seen January 7, 1998 (age 39)

Diana Lynn Melnick, born August 30, 1979, last seen December 27, 1995 (age 26)

Jane Doe, a woman still not identified

May 28: Punky Gustavson remembered

"I want you to know we are in pain every day..."

Dear little Cara,

2005: How does one fully express, much less comprehend, the horror of a bright young 6-year-old daughter, sister, niece brutally raped and left to die? The following are parts of victim impact statements read in court after Clifford Sleigh was convicted of first-degree murder for the death of Corrine "Punky" Gustavson. The family had to wait almost 13 years for this resolution and their reactions were reported in several newspapers.

Punky's father, Ray Gustavson, said:

"The crime against our baby girl has had a devastating effect every day of my life... I felt hopeless and depressed and this feeling lasted for several years. I felt empty inside my heart and body. This crime had taken away my family, my trust in people. I feel rage when I think about what he has done to Corinne and I'm afraid for the safety of other children."

Ron Davies, uncle, spoke these words:

"I want you to know that we are in pain every day... because Punky is not here to be part of my life. You took away my friend, my coffee buddy and someone who loved life and would never ever think of hurting another living thing. She was a very beautiful young lady who was very special to all of us. You took away our opportunity to watch her grow up... It hurts so much not having her here. When we were having a bad day or hurting, she would come around and say or do something that would put a smile on our face, or make us laugh. You took all that and her future away. You shattered a family and changed the course of all our futures..."

Amanda Davies remembered her cousin:

"Corinne captured many hearts ... People were drawn to her spirit. She was the most gracious child. Corinne would be the little girl dividing her candy so everybody could get some."

And finally Karen Valette spoke about her daughter:

“Since the day my daughter Punky went missing, my life and the lives of my family have been permanently damaged. There is not a day that goes by that we don’t feel the pain of losing her. We think about her every day, what would she be like today... I never got to say goodbye to her or “I love you, my girl.” We can’t see what she would be like after she finished school. I never had the chance to see her get married and have children of her own.

I had a hard time packing up her stuff and putting it away. It took years. I have not felt safe after Punky was taken from us. I was unable to be alone. It took me a long time to get over being alone. When I do find myself alone, I can’t stop thinking about her and what she went through. Was she cold, did she hurt? Did she call for me? I constantly wonder in my mind what she went through. What did you do to her for those days that you had her? Did she ask you to bring her home to me?

I can’t let my oldest girl go out and have fun because of what happened to her sister. It’s hard to let go. No one knows how I feel because it’s hard to tell, and no one can feel like we do. It is hard for us at Christmastime and her birthday because you took that away from us. Punky was fun to be with. She made everyone smile and laugh. All we have now is good memories and all the good times we had...”

May 29: Reflections on justice

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dear Cara,

1988: Our first year in Nova Scotia, you were 13 years old and in grade seven. Block wrote our Christmas letter stating: “No longer are we members of the land of sunshine and big skies... Both children have adapted very well to the change of location, friends, and culture. The subdivision is fabulous in terms of making people feel welcome and at home... Unfortunately, Buddy decided not to come with us, opting to stay in Alberta to complete high school.”

Buddy deciding not to come was an understatement. He almost tripped running to call his mom when told he had a choice. Block continued his hierarchical, demanding, and self-serving mode after our move.

One particularly humiliating time was when your friend Paula stayed with us for a few days while her parents were away. You were excited about her visit and took extra care to make sure your room looked nice. But Block was determined that you could not have that week in peace. He started in on you at supper as usual and I pretended he was talking to me to illustrate how stupid and inappropriate he was. That diverted attention from you but probably did nothing to enhance our reputation as a functional family in the community. I'm still embarrassed that he tried to demean us the way he did.

I wonder how Block lives with himself now, perpetuating layers of defense to convince himself that he is right and the rest of the world is wrong.

2005: My heart was still with the family of Punky Gustavson. Her killer's attempt to apologize in court was shouted down by one of Punky's cousins. It was hard to imagine how a man convicted of such a brutal crime could ever face himself, even if his words were true. His statement was, "I just want to apologize to the family and say I'm sorry for the pain that I brought this family and I accept full responsibility for my actions..." He received a mandatory life sentence with no parole for 25 years, the maximum penalty under Canadian law.

Not surprisingly, the killer had a long history of criminal charges dating back to when he was 16 years old. Past offences included robbery, attempted rape, theft, assaults, and two rapes of teenage girls. He was on parole when Corinne was raped and murdered.

An editorial in the *Edmonton Journal* summarized:

"To think that, in the midst of all that effort, frustration, fear and profound grief, a handful of people knew or suspected far more than they told police, is shameful. That they may well have confounded the effort to bring (the convicted) to justice and in the process, indirectly caused other children to come to harm is unforgivable. Police and prosecutors should go after these people to the full extent of the evidence and the law. We owe that much to Corinne and to (his) other victims."

May 30: Men behaving badly

One wonders NOT which comes first, the emaciated and strung out young women on the street looking to score for her next fix or the pathetic man cruising the streets for his opportune moment to score.

Dear Cara,

1988: Your grade seven teacher told me she'd never met anyone as angry as you and my reply was, "Try living with her." You complained that I never listened to you. In retrospect, I suppose I had trouble hearing because I felt your anger as judgement. If I had been more secure, maybe I would have been able to accept your feelings and help you work through them.

I am so sorry. At times I wondered why, if you were really so troubled, no one told me sooner. Yet your teacher tried and I didn't understand. Grade six seemed to be the beginning of your temper tantrums with budding adolescence. Grade seven in a new school in a new province with a new extended step-family may have been too much. Any good times with Block were the result of accommodating to his subtle and sometimes not so subtle demands. He did not appear to have the ability to give freely without expectation of return.

2005: Review of clippings takes me back to 1999 for comic relief. The following letter to the editor in the *Edmonton Journal* ran this date under the banner "Men Behaving Badly On 95th Street." It portrays the annoyance caused by men cruising in a residential area:

"Had the balding man in his mid-40s been stopped after picking up a young woman of no more than 15, last Saturday, he would have been introduced to Bill One and the concept that using children for sex is illegal.

Why are we not quickly publishing the names of johns who are convicted child abusers? We do not hesitate to publish the names of other convicted criminals, yet we do not touch convicted johns. Why? These are also our children.

I own a home and live in a community seriously affected by 'john' traffic. I am often asked why I think the 'johns' are the problem instead of the girls and women. On Saturday I was out delivering flyers along 95th Street between 112th and 118th avenues. I offered to do this street because I would not let my children go there. As

I did this, I ran into a girl and two women who were working the street. These women do little more than stand there watching the traffic.

The ‘johns,’ on the other hand, were ridiculous as usual. Every third or fourth vehicle was obviously looking for [action.] They beep their horns, cut each other off and look like absolute morons.

Even though I carried a flyer bag, wore my son’s baseball cap and went in and out of yards, these stupid ‘johns’ continued to ask me if I was ‘working’ and how much. Any woman walking down 95th Street is considered merchandise.

And they say feminism has gone too far. Apparently not far enough.”

Marie Renaud

May 31: Meet the Street marathon

“Wherever we are, whatever we do, we can choose to act from compassion rather than censure... We can build bridges.”

Kathy King in *The Street Light*, 1998

Dear little Cara,

1989: Still in grade eight, you had many good friends and found adventure where you could. You wrote a story for English about a new boy you met and really liked:

“J. G. is 15. He is gorgeous. He has blond hair and it is shaved on the sides and back... He is very nice. He lets me wear his jacket and sit on his skateboard. I also wear his watch.

He is athletic... He can do all these neat tricks on his skateboard. He can skateboard onto curbs, skate off halfpipes, skate off ramps, and skate down stair rails.

He is popular. He has lots of friends and most people look up to him. He loves music. He is a ‘Guns and Roses’ freak...

He adores girls. He flirts constantly. He is also nice. He helps out people when they are sad or mad. Most of all he is fun.”

I hope J. G. is well wherever he is and continues to make the ladies in his life happy.

1998: With about 50 other people, Will and I participated in a “Meet the Street” marathon by spending one night on the streets of Edmonton’s inner city. The event was to create awareness and raise funds for The Mustard Seed church. I walked in your memory, of course, and shared my reflections later in the July issue of *Our Voice*, a local community paper:

“... As I walked the streets for many hours that night, a surprising sense of calm resulted. I thought of the many people who had truly tried to be helpful and was grateful for their efforts. Cara’s tragic death, though predicted, was beyond the power of any one person to prevent. I started my walk hoping to get some answers, and the answer I received was a whisper, ‘It’s over. Let me rest in peace.’

Yes, it is over for my daughter, the once friendly little girl who liked gymnastics and horses and having a good time. Cara was born with a personality she did not choose, never matured to functional adulthood, and never found a place where she felt she belonged. People in ‘normal’ society didn’t understand her limitation and people on the street would say, ‘She’s a nice girl, she doesn’t belong here.’ ”

Another month begins. May can be unpredictable, sometimes warm, sometimes wet, sometimes even snow, but to me June is the confirmation of spring. June is also National Aboriginal History Month.

June 1: Mooning averted

2002: **Vanessa Christie**, age 17, mother of a 5-month-old daughter, was recovered from the North Saskatchewan River after she disappeared three weeks earlier on May 9th. Autopsy results revealed she had been strangled. Her ex-boyfriend was charged with second-degree murder and later sentenced to 14 years.

2017: The body of **Christine Wood**, age 21, was found in a field near Springfield, Manitoba, east of Winnipeg, by a farmer inspecting his crops. She was last seen August 19, 2016, leaving a hotel near the airport. Christine came from Oxford House First Nation in northern Manitoba and was in the city visiting family. Her death was declared a homicide in April and a man charged with second-degree murder.

Dear Cara,

1988: Our second year away, you were 14 years old and in grade eight. After combing the province for interesting positions and not finding anything quite to his liking, Block decided to become an insurance agent. Looking back, maybe his anxiety about employment made him so miserable. I was fortunate to find my job fairly quickly although it involved a lot of travelling.

Your activities centered around the horse. However, all good things come to an end. Spring (the horse) developed bronchitis in spring (the season) which cost a small fortune in vet bills and left her with dust sensitivity. I was afraid of her getting sick again plus your interest was waning, so we called the man who'd found her for us to sell her again. I was quite attached to the animal I didn't know existed a year earlier so I imagine it was hard on you as well.

Summer holidays were wonderful, too short but great while they lasted. Grandma and Grandpa were our first visitors from Alberta and Buddy was with us for most of the summer.

1993: Morning shock was you saying you needed \$375 for a noon appointment at the Morgentaler (abortion) Clinic. I cancelled my work day to accompany you, and thankfully, passed only one protester on duty. A few righteous citizens had taken it upon themselves to demonstrate their objections to abortion by picketing the Clinic and were ordered by a court injunction to stay across the street. I was never so tempted to moon anyone in my life and it might have been my first if staff hadn't ushered us quietly out a side door after your procedure.

How quick we are to judge what we do not understand. I wondered how many of those protesters would have taken you into their home, cared for you during your pregnancy and provided support for you and your baby together.

I used to think of composing an ad: *"Room and board wanted for pleasant impulsive pregnant young woman with learning disabilities and inclination to drug use. Constant and consistent supervision required. Life skill coaching with view to independent living would be an asset. Childcare skills need to be demonstrated and monitored. Long term care may be an option for both mother and child."* Of course, the ad was never placed because I did not know where or who to ask. I sometimes wonder if you died because there was no way on earth my prayers could be answered. I hope you are happy in Heaven.

June 2: Role of Medical Examiner

2007: **Jeanette Chief**, age 48, was found in a pond near Lloydminster. She had been missing four days.

2017: A memorial was held in Edmonton to remember 106 people, 28 women and 78 men whose deaths were linked to homelessness in 2016. The city is eight years into a 10-year plan to end homelessness. Edmonton's Coalition on Housing and Homelessness said at least 599 deaths have been tied to homelessness since the memorial service began 12 years earlier. That would be about one a month.

Hello sweetie,

Kathy Reichs' novels are built around the adventures of a forensic anthropologist who solves rather macabre crimes involving unidentified bones. I read her first book in 1998 to learn how a coroner used dental records. The answer seems obvious in retrospect. Dental x-rays taken from a corpse are compared with records provided by dentists of the living.

Each new novel release provides interesting tidbits of forensic investigation and I wonder what a defense attorney and Medical Examiner might chat about if your murder ever goes to trial. I was totally disgusted during the preliminary hearing regarding the murder of **Sherry Ann Upright**. (See January 3.) The man charged was driving north out of town with Sherry's body in the trunk of his car and a can of gasoline on the front seat. His nerves must have been a bit rattled, as it appeared he drove into the ditch after a fire started when he attempted to light a cigarette. Count one for the police in solving that murder.

The accused acquired the services of a legendary defense lawyer, quite possibly at taxpayers' expense. As the Medical Examiner gave evidence, the lawyer countered reference for reference, indicating he too was well read on the subject on ligature injuries. I almost gagged when he thanked the doctor for his time, adding, "It's always a pleasure to talk with you, as when we discussed gunshot wounds a few trials ago." How insulting for survivors to hear their loved ones' injuries become fodder of intellectual banter.

June 3: Why the secrecy?

2014: The body of **Freda Goodrunning**, age 35, was found in a storage shed. Her death was declared a homicide in October with details released to the media only on December 18. The reason for delay is unknown.

Dear Cara,

2005: The *Edmonton Journal* yesterday covered the story of a Canadian “sex tourist” accused of sexually torturing 51 women in Cambodia. Police seized about 70 videos he made of himself performing cruel and sadistic acts on women and children, including girls between the ages of seven and 12. How absolutely disgusting! My worst fear is that you are on a tape somewhere. Today it was reported the pervert received seven years for his crimes.

Barbara Walters interviewed Larry King as part of his 20-year anniversary with CNN. They both spoke about losing a child as the most terrible thing that could happen and not knowing how people continue. Well, we do. We have the choice of withdrawing into our grief or finding a way to make meaning. On a more positive note, Larry said what gave him most joy was seeing happiness in the eyes of his young sons. If only everyone in the world were secure enough to seek their own joy in making others happy.

June 4: World Day of Prayer

2015: **Claudia Mary Iron-Howard**, age 29, was stabbed in Edmonton. She grew up in Grand Cache northwest of Edmonton and struggled with alcoholism. A male suspect, a known drug dealer, was also stabbed to death two months later.

Dear Cara,

2005: The *Journal* reported the death of a young man in an industrial accident and I was deeply saddened to realize he was the son of a former colleague. My friend had been very supportive of me through my grief and now it was his turn to experience a tragic loss.

2006: A lovely prayer service was held at the Mustard Seed church in Edmonton to commemorate the missing and murdered women of the city. I had the privilege of sharing your story and Kate Quinn led prayers for the families. Kate, Executive Director of CEASE: Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, helped provide focus for my volunteer energy as well as being a symbol of hope for many survivors in Edmonton. (See March 1.)

Some of her heartfelt prayers are shared to honour this day of prayer:

“We join with all gathered here tonight to pray as a community, as a family, with all the families who grieve the loss of a daughter through murder, and those who wait anxiously to hear from a daughter who is missing.

We pray for mothers and fathers, whose hearts are aching, whose arms once held daughters who brought joy to their lives...

We pray for brothers, who try to understand what happened to their sisters...

We pray for sisters, who shared dreams, squabbles, laughter, and tears...

We pray for all family members who grieve in their own ways...

We pray for the children who have lost their mothers...

We pray for generations of families who were first harmed through the residential schools...

We pray for families affected by addictions, who live each day with the feelings of pain, loss, anger, helplessness, and sometimes hopelessness...

Creator God, we call out to You to help us listen to the hearts of our sisters and brothers and all who grieve. Guide us to support each other through compassion and action. Help us to see more clearly the causes of addiction, exploitation, and violence. Strengthen us to work for social justice and to create healthy, safe, and caring environments that welcome the vulnerable member of our community...”

June 5: Sad road back

2008: A skull found in Sherwood Park was later identified as **Shannon Maureen Collins**, age 29, who had been missing since the previous Christmas. Five years later her former boyfriend was charged with her murder. He was found guilty of second-degree murder in January 2017.

Dear Cara,

1989: Your transition from grade eight to nine was difficult. We visited Alberta that summer, just the two of us, and admittedly it was very hard to leave again. Even Block sensed we did not want to be there when he picked us up at the airport. You began to have more challenges in school and were moved to a modified math program in September.

1990: As we both well remember, this was not any easy year for our household. You were suspended from school three days in January after fighting with another student, and again three days in February after stealing from a gift shop while on a field trip.

Another tragic memory was Chip deciding to “teach you a lesson.” One of his friends hid behind the couch with a tape-recorder while he encouraged you to talk about alleged sexual exploits. He and his friends then circulated the tapes at school. I was livid that the production of inappropriate material happened in our home and that Block defended Chip’s participation.

Conflict continued to escalate between you and Block to the point he wanted you out of the house, as if it were not also your home. Your adolescence was turbulent for many reasons and his rigidity and withdrawal did not help. We moved to an apartment to give us some space. It was a bizarre chaotic time; I was unable to maintain a sense of order living between two worlds, and you were admitted to hospital.

You said Block made you feel “not good enough.” That was an experience we shared. I don’t know why I tried so hard to make his world OK or why I stayed as long as I did.

June 6: Teenage escapades

1990: “This 15-year old white single female was admitted to hospital for the first time. She threatened to commit suicide after an argument with her mother. She had attempted suicide twice in the past. She had been verbally very aggressive towards mother, non-compliant to rules and regulations, and rather noisy to the extent that mother was threatened with eviction....

She had been having some problems in getting along with teachers and was suspended twice from school, once for fighting and another time for shoplifting....

She has experimented with street drugs and alcohol but does not think that has anything to do with her losing her temper. She did not see it as a problem... She had very little insight into her problem and did not think she had done anything wrong... “

[Admission report, May 20]

1992: You won a diamond ring at a wet T-shirt contest.

Dear Cara,

1990: Reading about oneself in third person is disconcerting to say the least. Reviewing records of your admission to hospital, assessments of you, assessments of me, all seem quite removed from reality. I was described as a “gentle well-groomed woman who had been through many personal transitions.” True. Block was noted to be “unable to adapt to your needs and rigid in his approach.” True. I forgot you went through a period of sleeping with knives under your bed. It was also true that you could reduce me to tears and helplessness.

Grandma and Grandpa came for a second visit in the middle of all our turmoil. You spent most of the summer in hospital although you had several passes. The plan one day was for you to accompany Grandma and Grandpa to the airport for their flight home. Instead you jumped out of the car at a red light in downtown Halifax. I had no choice but to continue to the airport and report your escape to the hospital. Thankfully, you were found that evening.

Among my souvenirs are behaviour modification sheets from that fall. After discharge from hospital, you had the potential of “earning” \$2 a day for your cooperation in using appropriate language and keeping the apartment tidy with \$1 bonus for a good week. Most weeks you did well with those positive goals.

However, the strain of split living was still too much. You deserved a chance to be with people who knew and accepted you more easily so I decided to return to Alberta. I negotiated sole ownership of the Caravan, packed all our personal belongings in a small U-Haul trailer, and

by November we were on our way. Uncle Hippy came to help us drive back and we had a good trip in spite of spending a full day snowed in with a major blizzard outside of Chicago.

June 7: Cindi Broaddus Day

"Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves... I didn't want to be bitter... Being a victim gets you nowhere. Make every day count. We are all here on earth for some reason."

Cindi Broaddus in *A Random Act*

My darling Cara,

1990: We arrived back in Alberta before Christmas and lived with Auntie Grace for a month. I found employment; you turned 16 and enrolled in a grade ten Beauty Culture program. In February 1991, we participated in my parents' Family Day celebrations. Remember the parties we used to have in Vermilion? Grandma and Grandpa started the tradition of hosting supper after the Family Day holiday was declared in Alberta in 1990. The first year we received a phone call when we were still in Nova Scotia. 1991 was Grandma's Hawaii theme. She'd been on vacation and brought everybody back a T-shirt. You were still happy then.

2005: In the United States, today was proclaimed Cindi Broaddus day. Four years earlier her life was changed forever when a gallon of sulfuric acid was dropped from an overpass on an Oklahoma highway. The container crashed through the windshield of her car with acid severely burning her skin. Although she was given only a 30% chance of survival, she beat the odds with numerous skin grafts and reconstructive surgery.

June 8: First disappearance - EPS Strong

Indifference to missing and murdered women stands in contrast to recognition of those on the front line who work to ensure safety and investigate deaths.

2015: Constable Daniel Woodall was fatally shot while attending a residence to arrest a suspect. Daniel was the first member of the Edmonton Police Service in 25 years to be killed in the line of duty. (See December 24.)

Dear Cara,

1991: One afternoon we had a major blow-up when I came home to a smoke-filled apartment. You and your friends retreated to the balcony, where I locked you out until you apologized. I could not imagine what was so hard to understand about “no smoking inside.” I was also sick and tired of hearing about your friend Marley having her own place.

One night we were woken at 2 a.m. by Marley’s brother, Gordy, looking for his other sister. Another time he rang the doorbell offering me her shoes, allegedly because they had no money for food. I gave him a couple cans of soup and \$5 - as I doubted hunger was the real issue. Situations in which people beg for handouts rather than support themselves still baffle me.

I had words with the mother of those young people way back then. You were jealous that your friend had her own apartment with no expectation that she work or go to school. When I questioned the mother, she responded indignantly that she would raise her daughter her way. OK then... I wonder if she is alive today. I know the sister with shoes for collateral is not.

Later that June was the first time you disappeared. I’m embarrassed to remember how helpless I felt. We constantly argued about curfews and I didn’t know where you were most weekends. If I hadn’t been so worn down, I might have responded more assertively. You bugged and bugged to stay with your new friend Candace who lived just a few blocks away. You promised to continue school and I finally reluctantly agreed. Then your friend’s apartment was mysteriously vacated.

A couple nights later a message on my answering machine reported you were seen working on the street downtown and you “didn’t deserve that.” I searched the streets and left

messages with various agencies to no avail. Thank goodness Buddy and his friends were more decisive. They drove the night streets until they found you and brought you home.

Several nights of harassing phone calls and buzzer ringing at all hours followed but thankfully we lived in a secure building with a rear exit. Maybe I didn't ask the right questions so I never did learn the total truth. **I could not fathom a procurer at work or that a child in Edmonton could be abducted and trafficked in plain sight.**

I liked to check condos in the area when "open house" signs were displayed. On one such occasion, I chatted with the real estate lady and learned her daughter was controlled by a pimp in Vancouver. We kept in touch a while, comparing the exploitive situations in which our daughters landed, not the sort of thing average moms would understand – or want to. We were amazed to have found each other, both professional women faced with situations beyond our comprehension and ability to manage.

June 9: First Responders Day

Victims of street deserve respect in death.

Dear Cara,

1991: You were 17 years old for the summer of your orthodontic surgery. You looked so tiny and fragile back in your room with ice packs wrapped around your face. You must have thought you were going to die because you asked for prayers from the chaplain. My new age minister also visited you in hospital and I bought one of her tapes for when you came home.

With your jaw sawed, realigned, and wired shut for six weeks, you spent your recovery tanning in a nearby park. It was difficult to find time to spend with you that summer. It seemed you were either sleeping or out with your friends.

One job ended for me and another began. My main extra-curricular interest and socialization was my new church which became a true source of strength. My Mother's Day gift to myself was a ride in a hot air balloon. My second treat was a trip to San Francisco where I attended a play therapy conference.

I took a second job in anticipation of the cost of your dental surgery and was able to cover all of the above and still buy a used computer. Life returned to relative normal in the fall with both of us home together most evenings.

2005: A letter from a grieving mother was published in the *Edmonton Journal*:

Victims of the street still deserve respect

"Do we really know what respect is? As human beings, are we all treated with the respect that we deserve?

We all want to be treated with respect, but do we treat others in the same manner? Is it respect when you see a picture of a beautiful young woman in the newspaper with [derogatory labels]? ...

How quick we are to judge people when we really know nothing about them. We forget that these young women all have family, friends and co-workers who love and care about them. They may be a daughter, sister, or a mother. Most importantly, they are human beings.

My daughter, Charlene Gauld, was one of these recent victims. Charlene was loving and giving, always full of fun, laughter, and love. She had a sense of humor and always liked to tease. Charlene lived life to its fullest. She always said, "You never know what tomorrow will bring."

That is who Charlene Gauld was and will always be remembered as.

Does anyone ever take the time to think about how degrading and dehumanizing some words really are? I guess not, because it still continues to happen.

It is difficult enough to be dealing with the death of your loved one, never mind her not being given the respect that she deserves.

The next time we choose to label one of these victims, we must remember they are a human being and deserve to be treated like one."

Myrtle Gauld

June 10: Multiple memorials

"I am the gentle breeze upon your face, the twinkle in the stars.
I am the sudden ray of sunshine that warms your broken heart."

Unknown

Dear Cara,

1991: You returned to school in fall, still with Beauty Culture, and worked part-time at a hair salon until it interfered with your social life. Arguments tended to be about your friends calling too late at night. Your spare time was spent hanging out with Tall and partying with Charisma and Audacious. Still you were so innocent. You called one night from Tall's place when you woke up alone. I asked if you wanted to come home. You declined but said you were hungry and didn't know what to do. I suggested it would probably be fine to make yourself a piece of toast.

Buddy was still living with us and his girlfriend Drama spent time there as well, both of them doing homework on my computer. She could be annoying at times, even when she wasn't providing unsolicited parenting advice about how I should manage your behaviour. Remember the weighted punching bag "umpire" I purchased? You and Drama shared your frustration at parental authority by kicking it around the apartment. She had her issues as well. The kids at work named it "the babysitter" and had a similar response.

2005: The funeral of my friend's son made for an incredibly sad day. Greg's dedication as a single parent was the theme of his service. His obituary described him as protective: "He was known by friends and family alike as the considerate thoughtful one; a strong and silent person with a gentle spirit who prevailed when others were less sensible." Greg was survived by two children and two step-sons. "He was very good with his children, very dedicated to them," said their mother, "He was always proud of them."

June 11: Overwhelmed - formal apology

2004: Yet another battered body was discovered in a grove of trees south of Fort Saskatchewan. She was later identified as **Rachel Liz Quinney**, age 19, mother of two. She was reportedly addicted to crack cocaine, “a kid in a grown-up’s body,” couch surfing from day to day. Rachel’s family came forward in many ways to help create more positive media coverage. They remembered her as a happy little girl with a sweet smile and a sweet tooth, who badly wanted to kick her drug habit and return to school.

Dear Cara,

1992: You told me of your first pregnancy just after your 17th birthday. In my mind the baby was “TJ” for Tall Jr. after your boyfriend at the time. Tall seemed to be a nice enough fellow although you were obviously too young to be a parent. I remember him sitting in the bathroom reading to you from a magazine while you soaked in the tub. You had the door open and a wet towel over you so he “couldn’t see you.” I was astounded when people catered to you like that, and even more amazed that you expected it.

You had already been to Planned Parenthood and wanted an abortion. Two weeks later, you started to pass blood clots. We spent the evening at Emergency where doctors determined you’d had a complete miscarriage. One young intern was very upset that you had been eating while waiting. I think he wanted to practice surgery.

Another evening Metro stopped by with an expensive leather jacket. How could I impress upon you the need to be responsible for yourself when people kept buying you clothes? In retrospect, I wondered if he tried to be a procurer. He seemed pathetic, always at your beck and call, driving you where you wanted to go and showering you with gifts. I remember asking, “So Metro, have you heard about the Get-a-Life society?”

2005: I had a rough night, maybe too much coffee, maybe too many funerals. I tossed and turned for what seemed like hours, preoccupied with all that needed to be done. I thought of you as I pondered my choices for fall. I felt like an alien at work with everyone was speaking a

language I hardly knew and I wondered if that's how you felt about my expectations. It's important to know we have choices.

CFRN TV advertised another special about life on the streets. The promo mentioned eight bodies found in two and a half years, suggesting an assailant might have been in jail previously or was escalating behaviour for unknown reasons.

2008: Stephen Harper, then Prime Minister of Canada, issued an apology on behalf of the government of Canada for its role in the Indian Residential Schools policy:

The treatment of children in Indian Residential Schools is a sad chapter in our history.

For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. ... Two primary objectives were to remove and isolate children ... and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal...

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the Government of Canada now recognizes it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow, and we apologize for having done this. We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse of neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you. Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experiences, and for this we are sorry...

The Government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal people for this country for failing them so profoundly."

We will see how Canada follows through. As I used to tell you kids, "Sorry" means you're not going to do it anymore.

June 12: Wet T-shirt contest

"A storm was coming but that's not what she felt. It was adventure on the wind and it shivered down her spine."
Atticus (Facebook post)

Dear Cara,

1992: That spring you won a ring at a wet T-shirt contest at the Beverly Crest. It was beautiful with three rows of mini-diamonds. You wouldn't tell me where it came from and I was afraid it had been stolen. You weren't old enough to be in a bar at the time.

I had many battles in those days with the Liquor Board and local pubs about enforcing age restrictions. It seemed establishments turned a blind eye for profit and many of your friends were happy to share phony I.D.

When I phoned the bar in question about the alleged contest, a young lady explained the "elimination rounds" and gushed about the amazing ring that was final prize. Oh dear... so your story was verified. And you had been there many times. And... the establishments did not care about or enforce the age of participants.

Later that summer you pawned your diamond ring to get money to join your drummer friend, Mike, in Calgary. I reclaimed the ring after a discussion with the pawnshop owner about accepting goods from minors. My intention was to hold it until you could repay me, which of course you never did. Now I wear it in your memory.

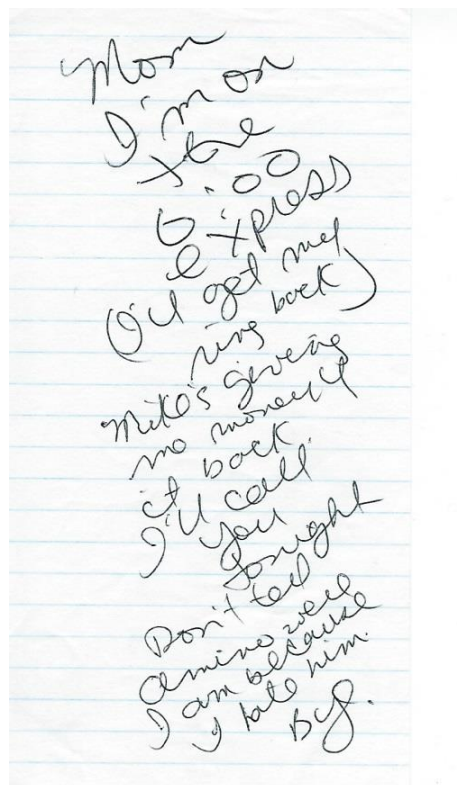
There was a note on the table when I came home from work, saying you were on your way to Calgary. You had talked about going all weekend but I didn't take you seriously. Mike phoned later to see if you were on your way.

You phoned when you arrived to say you were okay except for no money. Metro and another of your guy friends called, each ranting about the other. Metro seemed to want to

control you. Where do you find these people? The second, our neighbour from the building next door, at least seemed to have your best interests at heart.

A further call revealed you'd gone riding with my friend Dorothy. That's how wonderful she was, to make those arrangements because she knew you loved horses. After you decided to come home from Calgary, we started arguing about something again, even though I was happy to see you. You ranted about being mistreated and put down, and settled only when I agreed I was responsible for destroying your self-esteem and social life.

On my way to a friend's class as a guest presenter, I realized the diamond solitaire was missing from my ring. I searched the car and house carefully with no luck. You said it was probably down the drain, an interesting intuitive comment as once, after an argument with Block, I considered disposing of it in exactly that way. I liked the ring but it is probably just as well it is gone. I traded the gold at current value.



June 13: Grandpa John died

1997: **Jessica Marie Cardinal**, age 24, was found strangled in an Edmonton alley. Her sister described her as a “beautiful, sensitive person” who loved the blues and drew Aboriginal spiritual images. Friends spoke of her boundless energy and steady smile. Jessica had been sexually abused as a child and struggled with drug addiction. Her mother planned to spread some of Jessica’s ashes in Waterton Lakes National Park.

1998: **Tonia Jeffrey**, age 16, died from an overdose. She was a troubled young girl who had been introduced to drugs and street life by age 12 and later exploited by a nasty pimp (really, are there any other kind?) who introduced her to crack cocaine.

The *Edmonton Journal* published a beautiful memorial of Tonia’s life in 1999, prior to a scheduled fatality inquiry. (See January 11.) It outlined the care and support she was given to help survive chronic drug use and deteriorating health. Tonia was remembered as having amazing potential and being loved by many.

Dear Cara,

2003: Grandpa John died this morning after a terrible couple of weeks. He had been transferred from the nursing home to a geriatric unit at Ponoka for “assessment” after he was medicated into a semi-comatose state to “manage” his restlessness. There he broke his hip and was transferred to Red Deer hospital for acute care. Then he went back to Ponoka where the doctors insisted they were still actively treating him. My reaction was, “Give me a break.”

My brother arranged an ambulance to transport him back to Vermilion for palliative care and Will and I made a final visit to Ponoka to ensure he was transferred as requested. Hospital staff were very accommodating that evening and even offered us a room. “No, I’m staying right here because I don’t want to miss the doctor,” I insisted and we sat vigil overnight.

“It makes a difference when family gets involved,” a social worker told me later. I kind of thought some direction might have been included in his job description, but our mission was accomplished. Grandpa lived his final weeks surrounded by family and friends and was spared further “treatment” although I’m not sure he realized he was home.

June 14: More reflections

"Your peace is more important than driving yourself crazy trying to understand why something happened the way it did. Let it go."

Idil Ahmed, Evolver Social Movement

Dear Cara,

1992: I attended a workshop given by Mark Victor Hansen, before the *Chicken Soup* books became famous. His book *Dare to Win* became my inspiration.

In one of our more normal days, we had fun playing Monopoly all evening. I remember the irony of our new roommate cleaning up with hotels on cheap properties. After Buddy moved to live with his girlfriend, I sub-let his room to help cover expenses. Our new boarder was a young woman I met at church. Sometimes you were home and we had supper together.

One evening as we read *Angel* cards, I picked Delight and you Openness. Later when I started fuming about your phone use, you asked if I wasn't forgetting my Delight. Your sweet innocent sense of humor was one reason I usually reverted to hope.

One night a friend arrived in a limo to pick you up and you freaked out. I never did find out what that was all about. Maybe she was involved with what you called your kidnapping. Another night the police came in response to your gun scare about 4 a.m. I'm not sure what that was about either, except that you thought you saw a gun in the building next door.

In one of my less gracious moments, I had an encounter with one of your teachers about your chronic lateness. He said he was giving up teaching. I said I wished I could give up parenting. You and I had words later and you attacked me. I called the police but they wouldn't remove you. A nasty note slid under the apartment door indicated one of the neighbors was not impressed with the noise you made coming home about 6 a.m.

June 15: Conflicting times

2015: **Andrea Marie Berg**, age 42, was found beaten and stuffed in a shopping cart in an alley west of downtown Edmonton. Her ankles and wrists were bound. Andrea was described as a beloved member of Hope Mission, a social care agency, where she loved to sing: "She had a bright personality with a smile that lit up the room." Three women were charged with second-degree murder and a man with being an accessory.

Dear little Cara,

1992: One Sunday in premonition of a future yet unknown, I awoke to find you gone. You left a note saying you'd be with a male friend so I left several messages on his machine. When I returned from church, you were home acting as if nothing was out of the ordinary. You joined me and my friends for brunch, perfectly pleasant before leaving again.

You phoned later from a bar to say you were with drummer Mike. Your friend Tall came looking for you. Mike phoned in the early morning hours that he wanted to send you home. I agreed to cover your cab. Tall was here when I woke up the next morning. Not sure when he arrived. Just another day in our life... Sometimes you and Tall slept all evening in your room and woke up just as I was going to bed.

Other days I drove you and Mike around. One day you woke up in an irritable mood because of no smokes. You were waiting for Mike and I finally took you to meet him. Sometimes the path of least resistance made life easier. Later I received a late night call from you, wanting to be picked up because Metro was harassing you. I was able to calm you down.

Many times I had the locks changed after you came home with stories of losing your keys. One day I spent an hour scraping omelette off the stove and walls after your inebriated friend Audacious tried to make a snack the night before. I was not impressed even though you came home reasonably sober. Audacious is gone now too, killed in a car accident. I attended her wake. Someone said her face had been reconstructed for the viewing.

2017: CBC announced a federal government project aimed at Inuit men and boys to engage them “as agents of change in reducing violence against women and girls.” Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, commented that Inuit women identified the need to include men and boys is any successful strategy. What could be more self-evident?

June 16: “My heart shrinks”

1988: “How do you feel it in your body when your mom is mad?”

Family counsellor

Dear Cara,

1992: That summer I changed jobs again. My first move to a private agency was a perfect break but did not support me in the manner to which I wanted to become accustomed. After several interviews in and around our fair city, I settled on two part-time projects, one of which I hoped would transition to a dream job. As part of proving my worth, I boldly volunteered to lead a team-building workshop.

The evening before, you came home with some drunk about 12:30 a.m. and proceeded to argue with me about your rights. Your intoxicated friend wouldn’t leave and, unbeknown to me, our roommate called the police and waited for them downstairs. The police arrived and escorted the fellow out. You came back about 2 a.m. and again about 3:30 a.m. Our roommate woke me up yet again to say she was “not comfortable” so was leaving. At least she had a choice. I went to work with about four hours sleep for the infamous planning day.

Not as wise or congruent as I’d hoped to be, I jokingly made a stereotypic remark for which half the crowd judged me insensitive. Shame and humiliation washed over me when I realized offense had been taken where none was intended. Those who considered themselves evolved far beyond any such indiscretion judged me harshly while others accepted it was an

unfortunate attempt at humour. I felt chastised, of course, and remembered what you described earlier as “My heart shrinks.”

My heart did shrink. The pain in my chest lasted for weeks and whenever I think of the incident, I think of you. Did you really hurt that badly too?

You were officially an adult December 28, and legally responsible for your own decisions. How quickly 18 years had passed. You were a beautiful, adventurous young woman – too adventurous for me at times but we seemed to be holding our own. You were still at school and tried not to let it interfere too much with your social life.

I received two rather depressing cards that Christmas. One was from our friend Dorothy in Calgary who’d had a stroke. The other, from a former client in Nova Scotia, reported “My husband lost his other leg. We are fine.” All things are relative.

June 17: New men in our lives

1976: Sometime in the spring **Lori Kasprick**, then age 16, disappeared from her home in Hilliard, a small town east of Edmonton. Life at home was reportedly not easy and Lori often ran away. One time she did not return.

Dear Cara,

1993: Spring continued with a sprinkling of sporadic events. Life provided a break for me by introducing Will. We met at a singles’ dance.

The pattern at our apartment was that you were often getting ready to leave when I came home from work. One Sunday after brunch I found you, Dipstick, Evilana and Melissa sleeping. I woke you all up and kicked you out to discourage the apartment being treated as a hostel.

Another morning you came home at about 7:30 a.m. and argued with someone on the phone for over an hour. Apparently, it wasn’t just me who triggered your rages.

When your friend Evilana was kicked out of her home, I took your keys away as a precaution. She was one girl I did not trust. Her father frequently phoned to blame you for being a bad influence but she could lie to my face without blinking. He died unexpectedly of a heart attack, an early warning for me to stay calm. I kept his last recorded threat as a reminder.

Just before school ended for the summer, you were in a particularly foul mood one evening and asked to be dropped off for a friend's funeral. I found out later she had committed suicide and was the first of several friends to die. You wore your black leather shorts.

Neighbors complained about bikes in the hallway. I couldn't imagine any of your friends athletic or ambitious enough to carry bikes to the third floor. Sure enough it was the daughter of another tenant. If only they knew, I thought, how fortunate I would be to have my worries limited to bikes.

Cinder called one day to say Aura was missing. You arrived home together just as I was going through your phone book to look for numbers. Before planning a little holiday with Will, I arranged for you to stay with them. My fear was that your friends would treat the apartment as a party address while I was gone. You stalled until the very last minute before leaving and then wanted to be dropped off at Rock City. I left your clothes and money with Cinder.

When Will and I returned from our holiday, I picked you up at Cinder's and met your new friend Jerk. You were infatuated and completely unaware he was not too bright. He led you down a path of deceit and destruction while I welcomed a chance at normality with my Will.

June 18: The final straw

The story of the straw that broke the camel's back comes from Arabian folklore. A poor camel was loaded as much as possible until he collapsed with the final straw. The phrase refers to a seemingly minor incident which causes an unpredictable large reaction because of the cumulative effect of earlier small actions.

Dear Cara,

1993: One morning I woke up to find a strange man going through my purse. He stammered, “I was just...” “Leaving,” I suggested and he got the hint. You and Aura said he’d given you a ride home and needed a place to sleep. Luckily, no money was missing. I was angry all day and decided it was time for you to move out if you could not demonstrate more respect for our home. You protested he was Aura’s friend, not yours, and I insisted you were responsible for letting him in. You stalled all evening and finally left for Jerk’s via Rock City.

Later you agreed to talk and said you wanted another chance. All I wanted was that you come home evenings during school nights, attend classes regularly, and generally treat our home with some respect. That was all I’d asked since we returned to Edmonton.

Summer continued. One morning I knocked on your door, turned on the lights, and told you and Jerk to get up and do something. I must have shocked Jerk because he actually jumped. When I came home later, the two of you had been out apartment hunting. Good.

Over the next few weeks all of the following transpired. Jerk called about 4 a.m. one morning to say he’d lost you at the bar. You can imagine how sympathetic I was. You had the audacity to come home about 4:30 a.m. You buzzed about ten minutes before I finally let you in for fear of waking the neighbours. We had a big argument and I told you to keep moving. You phoned another friend to come and pick you up.

You phoned later to invite me for a visit with you and Jerk and to show me the basement suite you found. The next day I came home at noon to give you and Jerk a ride to the welfare office as requested, although I also phoned the Minister’s office to complain about the easy access to money of so-called “common-law” couples. As much as I wanted you on your own and independent, it was not the responsibility of the tax-payer.

The conditions for you coming home in the interim were 11 p.m. curfew, no late visitors, and to be up and gone by 8 a.m. One night you decided to go out at 11:30 p.m. No problem. I got up and locked the door. Jerk was foolish enough to buzz at 3 a.m. and was denied entry. You phoned three times crying and complaining.

Another night you must have had nowhere to go because you showed up alone on the dot of 11 p.m. Your neediness reminded me of your father and made me realize it is much easier to separate from a partner than from a child. With a partner, we can admit our when energies are no longer in sync and accept it is best to live apart. It is more difficult decision with a child, even when the child is legally an adult. I woke up to find Jerk in your room. He was very fortunate I did not hear him come in. You finally got away for school with his help and stopped by later in the evening to do laundry. You both brought me a belated birthday card and gift, a peace offering probably stolen.

A few days later, towards the end of the month, you phoned to say Jerk dumped you and left with the cheque that was supposed to pay rent at the apartment you found together. While cleaning, I discovered gouge marks along my bedroom door. You admitted Jerk tried to break in. Angry was an under-statement. I wanted him to pay for daring to violate my space and for you to take a stand against his betrayal. I called police to report the attempted break-in and you refused to give a statement because, after all, you were there when it happened.

Years later I would reflect that it was just a door. At the time, however, it was the final straw that broke the limits of my tolerance. It marked the end of your so-called friends violating our home; and because of your lack of discernment, it was the end of our joint tenancy. You were 18 years old, legally an adult, and about to be responsible for your own choices.

June 19: Justice delayed

2005: News today told of a trial in Philadelphia, Mississippi, for a man accused of killing three civil rights workers in 1964. It's hard to imagine a family having to wait 41 years for justice. The accused was 80 years old and the mother of one of the men killed 82. There was a picture of her on the stand, still wiping tears from her eyes as she testified. I hope I don't have to go through something like that in another 30 years.

Dear Cara,

1993: You moved temporarily across the street with friends who were kind enough to let you sleep on their couch. Aura's mom felt sorry for you and offered to have you live with them and continue school from their place. I gratefully accepted her offer, we agreed on a room and board amount, and you returned to school in the fall.

You were legally an adult but not eligible for financial assistance, in the wisdom of the government, if you attended school. "Common-law" with an unemployed Jerk was no problem, but presumably, if you had the motivation or wherewithal to better yourself, you could also begin to accumulate debt. Nevertheless, as long as you cooperated, I was happier to support your potential education rather than have you receive financial assistance for doing nothing.

Your first criminal charges happened as a result of Jerk. The police arrived to look for him at Dipstick's townhouse and apparently advised charges would be laid against anyone who didn't cooperate. You covered for him while he attempted to hide.

1994: I accompanied you to court for your trial. Your charge was "obstructing a police officer." The thought of Jerk trying to slither under a mattress still causes me to shake my head. Your smile, while the circumstances were being explained, led the judge to believe you did not appreciate the seriousness of the situation. Nevertheless, I felt you received a fair and appropriate sentence under the circumstances – a conditional discharge with six months of probation and 50 hours of community service.

June 20: World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day is observed throughout the world to raise awareness of the situation of refugees and to stop discrimination.

2017: In the meantime, the City of Edmonton reported that the licensing of body-rub parlors, in clear contradiction to federal legislation which makes buying sex illegal, was considered regulation of “non-accredited massage.” One wonders how much lawyers are paid to come up with such euphemisms, how they live with themselves, and why the Mayor and Council allow such duplicity.

Dear Cara,

2005: Every trip to the mall is a trip down memory lane. I remember how much you liked Yogen Fruze and how often we used to stop for treats. You would enjoy the wig kiosk. You loved the hairpiece I bought for you after the haircut you didn’t like, another attempt to soothe your sorrowful spirit. You always wanted hair extensions, which I couldn’t afford. Mind you, you didn’t want them bad enough to save your own money.

You liked to shop at Le Chateau. Benetton reminds me of shopping in Halifax. Transit is where I bought your last pair of shoes. You were interested in make-up and thought you might like to work at Merle Norman. You probably needed more coaching in customer service because you soaked me when I volunteered as your client for Beauty Culture class.

2016: The miracle of spring was a baby boy born to your friend Aura who survived many years of drug abuse and was never before pregnant. Her mom Cinder continues to bend backwards over and over and over again in attempts to set boundaries while saving, protecting, pleading with, threatening and rescuing Aura. Cinder and I are each painfully aware that what happened to one of our daughters could have happened to the other. “What would you do?” she often asks and adds, “Sometimes I think it is easier for you.”

Grief is hard; living with an addict is even harder.