



Happy Memories

The following essay, written by fifteen-year-old Michael Drover as a high school writing project, was presented subsequently by him to the CAMR, Newfoundland and Labrador Division's annual general meeting in Marystown, May 3, 1985. Later it was printed in the Canadian Journal on Mental Retardation. The subject of the essay, Maureen Mackinnon aka Tiny Mackinnon celebrated her 75th birthday on May 30, 2017, and she and her nephew, Michael are still very important in each other's life.

A Time to Love

"To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven ... a time to love..."

I had often heard this cliché, but it never struck home as forcibly as it did one day as I thought about my Aunt Maureen Mackinnon...

The life story of this incredible human being begins on a spring day in 1942 when my grandmother gave birth to a tiny, handicapped child. As often is the case, many people suggested that Gran put Maureen (now affectionately known as "Tiny"), into an institution. This she refused to do. When Tiny was two, Gran's father, himself a doctor, suggested that Tiny be taken to Montreal for an assessment. Though she was pregnant, she readily agreed. The trip was horrendous, and the combination of pressure and anxiety resulted in my grandmother's miscarrying. Ironically, she ended up in the same hospital as Tiny, but was confined to her bed and not able to see her. The assessment was as expected – there was nothing that could be done. Her life expectancy was about five years. Again the question arose. Should she institutionalize Tiny? Gran's conscience stood strong, but her head was being influenced by well-meaning friends and neighbours. Gran [and Grandad] grappled with the question and thought, "The dear little soul; she may not be as others, but she deserves a home, a family, and love." She knew her mind was made up. Even though she realized that it would require an immense amount of work and patience, she decided to try to give Tiny as normal a life as possible.

I didn't know any of this until recently. Perhaps I became less self-centered and began to look

around me. Anyhow, until I was about 14 I had not really thought about the effect my Aunt Maureen has had on my life. I have always taken her for granted, a non-changing entity that would remain in my life forever.



Last summer I spent a holiday on my own with Gran and Tiny. It seemed that in that week I really saw Tiny in a different way, and I began to think about how she has changed my life. I have **never** seen her get angry, regardless of the situation. People sometimes tease her, but she responds with kindness and love, not with sharp words. I have **never** heard her say anything bad about anyone; in fact, she gets upset if people around her are cross with one another. I have **never** heard her refuse anyone a favour. She will do anything within her power, no matter how long it takes her, or how hard she has to work. When you try to thank her she quickly changes the subject. She is content in knowing that you are satisfied.

Tiny is very hospitable. She always makes people welcome in her home. When my friends come she brings us Coke and cookies. She looks so pleased. I can hear her now. "That's for you Michael, my son." She is so kind that she makes me feel ashamed of myself. (I'm supposed to be "normal" but she teaches me so many things.)

I watched her more on that trip than I had before, and suddenly I realized that her mental handicap doesn't hinder her a bit. She's as complete and self-sufficient a person as any on God's earth.

My grandmother is now 75, and has severe asthma and angina. It is a struggle for her to get from one place to another. Her tiny, handicapped child, now 42, has come into her own. It is because of her that my grandmother can remain in her own home. Tiny is more responsible than anyone else I know. She cooks, cleans, dusts, and

vacuums. She does all the heavy and strenuous housework, and still has time to visit neighbours and friends. [Tiny had a worker who came Monday through Friday during the day who "helped" her out. She and Gennie Little walked downtown for a Coke, and visited friends. They also walked two kilometres to do grocery shopping. The store delivered so they'd come home by bus.] Although she cannot read or write, and is not educated in the traditional sense of the word, she is well aware of what is happening around her. Tiny has the wisdom of having led a full, happy life despite limitations.

Who would have known that my grandmother's tiny handicapped child would become such a valuable, functioning, essential part of society?

Michael Drover

Happy Birthday

- February 26 - Mitchell B
- March 3 - Sarah K
- March 8 - Patti B
- March 13 - David B
- March 17 - Elissa G
- March 28 - Marilyn B and
Lorraine A
- April 2 - Mark A
- April 10 - Anton B
- April 23 - Marilyn A and Sheilah M-D



Jam Circle

Each month we have fun making music and rhythm together. Check out the Facebook event for more information.

Each month, we need some help with it - Setting up the chairs and displaying instruments on tables. And of course, refreshments are an important part of the social time together. And when we're done, we tidy up

Where? Mmap Gallery at the ACC

When? the fourth Saturday of each month

How long? arrive at 1:30 and done by 4

Please let us know if you can be of any help. Come join the fun!

The next **Community Gathering** will be the annual **St. Patrick's Day Event** on March 18th. This will include a Pot Luck supper, 4:00 to 7:00 PM. The meats will be provided as well as the deserts and the rolls. The community will be asked to prepare the salads. The program will include a St. Patrick's Day sing-a-long, a reflection and the singing of a Meal Grace. Green will be the colour of the day.



Check FaceBook for up-to-the-minute information on our activities
facebook.com/larcheavalon

The first L'Arche Avalon

Spiritual Expression was held on February 4 in the Multipurpose Room in the West Tower of Pleasant View Towers, a big open room with a whole wall of windows looking out on the lovely sunny winter afternoon. This spiritual and contemplative time is another dimension of life in a L'Arche community that we want to explore together. Felix shared his sadness at the recent death of his friend, Dave. Paul, Mark, Dougie and Felix clearly enjoyed the music and singing. Sheilah and Lewis both enjoyed having the time to just listen quietly to the Taize music. The session was a hopeful beginning and a foretaste of the possibilities of Spiritual Expressions to come. Peter read a thought-provoking piece about "belonging" which prompted quite a bit of discussion and response.

These sessions will be held on the first Sunday of each month from 2 - 3 pm



Weekly Lunch

L'Arche Avalon invites you to a drop-in Lunch at the Avalon Mall foodcourt between noon and 2 pm. Bring your lunch or buy one on site and join us to hang out, share a meal

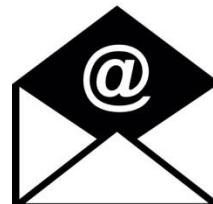
(an important feature of L'Arche communities around the world) and meet our community members.

Everyone welcome.



**INTERESTED IN
GETTING INVOLVED
WITH US?**

*Sign up for our email blasts
to keep up to date on what's going on.
email office@larcheavalon.ca*



“Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.” - *Henri J. M. Nouwen*



Monthly Walk

The monthly walk is on the second Saturday of the month at either Kent's Pond or the Field House at the University. March 10 and April 14 are our next dates.



Join us for an afternoon of casual fun and exercise. If meeting at the Field House due to the weather, the cost is \$3.05 and you will need indoor shoes. Both locations are accessible and wheelchair user friendly.

During nice summer weather, we meet on the Confederation Building parking lot at the red dot on the map.

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