

FRIENDS OF THE LITTLE SISTERS OF JOY

My dear Friends

CHRISTMAS 2015

My time in Toronto was so extraordinary that it has taken me quite a while to adjust to life back in England. In the three weeks that I was there, I lived life to the full and did a little travelling as well as giving the Book Launch for my new little memoir, *Where the Woods meet the Water*.

I spent the first week before the Launch getting acclimatised and renewing my friendships in Toronto. Gary, my host, gave me one of his beautiful rooms to stay in and I entertained him with some of the music from the launch, as he was unable to come on the night.

I was delighted to see Susan Duff, owner of the Ten Editions bookshop, and thrilled that she had put my poster in the window, hopefully for some students to see who would stroll by on their way to the university. I touched base with the Jewish Community Centre and spoke with a lady called Sharoni in their beautiful upstairs Synagogue about Jewish life in Toronto and how the centre is helping the downtown Jewish community to become more vibrant.

Dr Sharon Reid, Director of the George Ignatieff Theatre, where I was to hold the launch, graciously gave some rehearsal time in the lovely and intimate theatre; my cousin Sari, herself a musician, gave me some invaluable advice on performance that was to make me more confident on the night.

The Book Launch took place on Saturday, 12th September on the only rainy night for three weeks! I took it as a sign of Divine grace (a common idea in many traditions) as it all went so well, and I wove my life story in-between the Jewish music and songs of the 60's.

The modest but receptive gathering came from the Jewish, Christian and Native Canadian communities and were very happy to join in the singing, I had a lot of musical support from my dear friend Helena Burnstein, who knew all the Jewish melodies. Fr Paul MacCauley, of the Spiritan Fathers, came all the way from Scarborough and pointed out that when I met him in 2005 he

revealed that one of their co-Founders, Francis Liebermann, was also a Jew. There was a man in the audience who had the same surname as mine and who had spotted an advert in the university which was why he came.

Afterwards I signed and sold books and chatted to the audience, who very valiantly made their way home in the rain.

I gave myself three days' grace, then set off by train and bus to one of the beautiful places I have ever seen; Niagara-on-the-Lake. Nestling between Niagara Falls and St Catherines, the name means, in the Mohawk language, '*the place between the waters.*' Bursting with vineyards, this oasis of peace lies on Lake Ontario, which stretches right back to Toronto. There is plenty of history in this little town (not all of it auspicious) and people flock on the tourist trail, in the heart of the community.

I was staying with Janie Lewis and her husband and right opposite is a negro graveyard, indicating that, at the heart of the time of slavery, Niagara-on-the-Lake offered some sort of refuge to the black slave community. British colonialism was at its height, as indicated by some of the buildings that still exist.

When some people discovered that I had just given a book launch in Toronto, they were enthusiastic and I was even able to sell some books on the street as I went round meeting people.

One day I took cab to the Diocese of St Catherines, some 50km away, to meet the Chancellor, the Bishop's assistant. Fr Charles Moser, an American priest from Buffalo received me with great hospitality and showed an interest in the Project and The little Sisters of Joy. A little window of opportunity has opened up for the future, in that it may be possible to do another presentation for either a Church group in his part of the world or for a university women's group in Toronto.

When I got back to Toronto the Jewish Holy days were well under way. Can you imagine how thrilled I was to discover that a young and vibrant group from the Jewish community were celebrating the Jewish New Year right near me in the Native Canadian Centre?!! As I joined them, we prayed: for the State of Israel, for the First Nations and for the Migrants. **HAPPY NEW YEAR from Gila**