

Jan.2,2023

My Dear Friend:

After our conversation on the phone, I realize that there are so many feelings I need to express directly to you. As I reflect on my years of challenging times, interesting philosophical debates, and the many occasions of pure joy, you so often are there.

I first met you through St. Joseph's discussion club. I remember one night voicing my frustration that my teacher's salary was not enough to get my family through the summer break, and we were out of food. Later that evening after everyone had gone, there was a loud knock at the front door. I cautiously opened it and peered down the dimly lit walkway leading to the entrance of our little house. I saw nothing. I heard nothing. Then I looked down at my feet and there sat several bags of groceries. I never said anything to anyone or asked who did this, since the donor apparently was not looking for recognition, but rather recognized a need and responded to it. I have thought back on this experience several times over my life, and I'm pretty sure I know who provided the impetus for this kind gesture.

Eventually, other challenging situations arose. A "bridge loan" was needed for my malfunctioning car, and you were there. Then came the very painful "restructuring" of my family. When I needed someone to talk to, you were there. When I needed to keep moving my residence (and thus my belongings - OH that piano! ) you were there. When I lay in the hospital in San Francisco waiting for a serious back surgery, you were there!

I've found in my reflections, however, that it wasn't only your many kind gestures that made me call you friend, but the camping trips with the many philosophical/spiritual "brain - storming" sessions as well. Who can forget sitting around the campfire, sipping wine and even occasionally exploring a radical concept just for the fun of it! I STILL think the Monastery idea had potential!

Camping trips were not our only outdoor activities. There were hikes that made me ask the question, " This is so great being out here, why haven't I done this before?" And, of course, the feat of climbing Mount Shasta stands out from all the rest. As we struggled to scale its rocky, volcanic surface, taking two steps upward and sliding back one, I kept saying to myself, " Don't give up; no one else in my family has ever even thought of doing such a thing, but I will have done it!" I did find out on this trip that you had your limits for helping others and were, as they say, only human after all. When I lay freezing in my "sleep-over" style sleeping bag on the snow covered ground, I called

out to you how terribly cold I was. You responded from your very warm, down sleeping bag that there was an extra blanket on the other side of the camp. This was followed by a long silence that implied I would have to walk through the frigid darkness and get it myself. Perhaps you were trying to teach the concept of self reliance! However, I also learned that you don't climb a mountain with a man without developing a special bond between the two of you.

I feel that bond has existed all these years, not only between us personally, but between our families as well. The movie of our lives projects many family camping trips, dinners, children growing, and the sound track rings of so much laughter! You and Judy have always been so open to real life experiences, and no matter what we were doing or talking about, there's always been that wonderful laughter!

And so, as I have revisited these many life affirming experiences, I have come to fully realize something that previously lingered in my intuition - somewhere along the journey you were not only my Friend, but also became my "Spiritual Brother." Since a spiritual bond cannot be broken, when the time does come for your "transition" to what comes next, I cannot and will not say goodbye, but rather think of the Spanish expression, "Hasta Luego" - until then, when I shall see you!

Gary