



BE FREE, BE TRUTHFUL, BE BOLD

Jane Hurshman Corkum
January 25, 1949 - February 22, 1992

The death of Jane Hurshman Corkum is a terrible tragedy, one felt not only by her family and close friends but by the many women to whom she gave hope for their own survival, and by all of us who worked with her. However, the tragedy of her death should not overshadow the victory of her life. Jane talked about her victory of survival last November in Dartmouth.

"Hello from all the years of pain that I and my son endured and all the pain of a bruised body and spirit. I want to make people aware of what can happen to them and their chil-

dren and their dreams. Only then will life have a meaning and the pain go away and the nightmare end. It has been almost ten years and for me the healing is not complete. There is still a lot to do and a lot to be said and I expect to be around to do that. I can not rewrite my past or forget it. By speaking out I can also help myself and give my life a purpose and meaning and replace those old fears.

Fear and shame and failure are all the emotions that are experienced by a battered woman. I was born in a time when people did not reveal their personal problems. Emotions were kept inside, a secret. We all keep up appearances. An it is all part of early conditioning and very deep

rooted. Battering and violence is not the taboo, speaking out against it is. It can only continue if we remain silent. I want to tell you not to be silent. Come forward. Be heard. The more that come forward the sooner we can change society's attitudes. Tell your story no matter how shocking. We must unite with one view. Do not cover up the bruises or your story. I want you to know that there are women out there being battered right now. There is still not a day that I don't wake up and think 'who is it happening to now?'"

Excerpt from a speech that Jane gave to the Dartmouth Task Force on Violence Against Women. November 1991. Courtesy CBC.



Jane Hurshman Corkum

Light of mourning

BY YVONNE HANSON

Jane Hurshman Corkum's death shocked the community who saw her as a symbol of strength for women suffering from abuse and its emotional flashbacks.

Jane was a light of guidance for the various organizations she worked with, including the Elizabeth Fry Society, and Services for Sexual Assault Victims, and a personal counsellor for the many women who

contacted her to ask for help in their own struggles against violence.

Anita Martinez, a friend of Jane's, stated in the community vigil, that "Jane was an ordinary woman in an extraordinary time." The debilitating circumstances living with Billy Stafford, her common-law husband, moved her to a state of such vulnerability that she had to defend her and her son's lives by ending Stafford's. Her personal encounters with that intense pain persisted in her own

movement to eradicate it from other women's lives and to educate the justice system from blaming women for the violence to which they are victims, not perpetrators.

We have lost a hero in our movement for justice, recognition and social change. Although we will mourn for that loss, we must also realize our own inner strengths to continue the same passionate fight for a fulfilling life devoid of abuse.



Legal activists speak out

BY LARA MORRIS

Reading week is not always for reading, however, 18 law students found time to do some professional development as they attended the first "LEAF Symposium on Sex Equality Litigation" from February 14 through 16 in Ottawa.

The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) hosted the conference titled "Women's Equality Rights in the Courts - Widening the Circle". Criticized for being a white, elitist feminist organization, this conference represents LEAF's ongoing effort to include a greater variety of women in its activities.

Women of different races, classes, sexual orientation and physical abilities came together to share their varied educational and professional backgrounds.

Conference workshops and plenaries offered a full menu of ways to approach the law from a feminist perspective. It is from this perspective that LEAF litigators define equality.

They reject what some refer to as the "stupid" theory of equality where likes are treated alike and unlikes unequal. A new theory of equality was first accepted by the Supreme Court of Canada after LEAF's intervention in the *Andrews* case. Under this new approach equality is defined in terms of inequality experienced by the disadvantaged.

American feminist legal activist Catherine MacKinnon, a guest speaker at the conference, offers an example of the difference between these approaches to equality: "Before *Andrews*, when a woman argued that the police unconstitutionally institutionalized her sex inequality by failing to warn her of a rapist they knew about, she had to find a man in a position like hers and show the police treated him better. After *Andrews*, she need only show that being a potential rape victim is being a member of a group disadvantaged on the basis of sex."

Aboriginal rights, employment, sexual assault, pornography, reproduction, immigration, and sexual

orientation issues are just a few of the areas in which women's lives are affected by sex equality litigation. The number of women working on such litigation was inspiring to students attending the conference.

LEAF, founded in 1985 is a national women's organization that promotes equality for women, primarily using the sex equality provisions of the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. LEAF's mandate is twofold: to argue test cases before the Canadian courts, human rights commissions and government agencies on behalf of women, and to provide public education on the issue of sex equality.

Arguing test cases is expensive. Taking a case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada can cost upwards of \$700,000. If you would like to make a contribution to assist LEAF's endeavours, please send a cheque payable to LEAF to 489 College St., Suite 403, Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1A5. Contributions over \$10 are tax deductible.