

1043 HASTIE ROAD
PITTSBURGH, PA. 15234

NOVEMBER 9, 1969

DEAR MRS. COHEN,

I'm JANICE.

WHEN I WAS 12, JUST A LONELY LITTLE GIRL WITH BIG EYES & A SENSITIVE-TO-EVERYTHING HEART I WAS STRICKEN VERY BADLY WITH A MAD ADULATION & ADMIRATION FOR A ROCK SINGING GROUP KNOWN AS THE BEATLES. IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN HOW REAL THOSE 4 BOYS WERE TO ME & HOW REAL MY LOVE WAS FOR THEM. NO ONE UNDERSTOOD HOW I FELT UNTIL I PICKED UP THE NEWSPAPER ONE DAY & READ A SENSITIVELY WRITTEN ARTICLE ~~ABOUT~~ BY A MAN NAMED HAROLD V. COHEN.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHO HE WAS OR WHAT HE WAS OR HOW OLD HE WAS. SOMETHING IN WHAT HE SAID & HOW HE SAID IT STIRRED A FEELING OF JOY & HOPE IN ME & I WAS MOVED TO SIT DOWN AT A TINY TABLE IN THE CELLAR TO SCRIBBLE OFF A PAINFUL, AWKWARD 4 PAGE LETTER FULL OF LOVE & TENDER CONFUSION & GENTLE DREAMS & CALLOW THOUGHTS ABOUT LIFE. IT WAS A SAD SILLY LETTER, MARRED BY MANY MISTAKES & REASURES BUT IT WAS SINCERE.

I NEVER DREAMED MR. COHEN WOULD ANSWER ME, IT WAS ENOUGH FOR ME TO KNOW HE'D READ IT & UNDERSTAND. SOMEONE WOULD LISTEN & WOULD UNDERSTAND. I WAS ECSTATIC!

AND THEN ONE DAY A LETTER WITH A POST-GAZETTE RETURN ADDRESS BURST INTO MY LIFE TURNING MAY INTO CHRISTMAS. MR. COHEN HAD BEEN TOUCHED BY MY LETTER, HAD BEEN MOVED, HE WAS SENDING ME TWO TICKETS TO THE BEATLE CONCERT. 'YES, JANICE,' HE WROTE, 'THERE REALLY IS A SANTA CLAUS.' SINCE THAT DAY I HAVE ALWAYS ~~LOVED~~ ^{BELIEVED} IT.

IN THE LAST FIVE YRS. I HAVE WRITTEN MANY LETTERS

TO HAROLD COHEN RELATING MY MANY ADVENTURES IN ENTHUSIASTIC IMAGERY, PAINTING PICTURES WITH WORDS FOR HIM OF MY DREAMS & HOPES, TELLING HIM OVER & OVER AGAIN HOW MUCH I THOUGHT OF HIS KINDNESS. MANY TIMES I WANTED TO SAY, 'I LOVE YOU' BUT HE DIDN'T WANT THAT, I WANTED TO SAY 'LET ME MEET YOU & SHAKE YOUR HAND, LET ME SAY THANK-YOU WITH MY VOICE & EYES' BUT IT WASN'T TO BE.

I FOUND IN HIM A FRIEND, A DEAR MAN WITH THAT RARE GIFT OF REMEMBERING THE TENDER PAIN OF YOUTH, OF REACHING OUT HIS HAND THROUGH A LETTER & TAKING HOLD OF YOUR HEART. HE NEVER GREW TIRED OF LISTENING TO MY FOOLISH CHATTER. MY LETTERS MUST HAVE BEEN AMUSING TO HIM BUT HE NEVER LAUGHED. HE SENT ME HIS SMILES, HIS ENCOURAGEMENT, HIS FONDNESS IN SWEET LITTLE LETTERS, VERY SIMPLE & OH SO BEAUTIFUL. I WAS AN ECHO OF HIS BOYISH DREAMS, I THINK. I WANTED TO GO ON STAGE AS MOST GIRLS DO & MY INTENSE LONGING & FRUSTRATION SET HIS OWN YOUTHFUL YEARNINGS FLOWING THROUGH HIM AGAIN. I ALWAYS DREAMT OF GROWING UP & BEING A STAR & HAVING HIM WRITE ABOUT ME IN HIS COLUMN. JUST HIM, NO ONE ELSE, ONLY HIS SPECIAL WARM PRAISE.

HE KNEW I WOULD NEVER GET INTO CARNEGIE-MELLON OR BOSTON UNIVERSITY, I WAS A CHILD WITH ONLY VISIONS & HOPE TO BACK ME UP & A LITTLE BIT OF RAW TALENT WHICH POURED OUT OF ME RATHER RECKLESSLY AT TIMES. I'D NO EXPERIENCE & A WEALTH OF COMPETITION. BUT HE NEVER DISCOURAGED ME, HE TOLD ME TO TRY & WHEN I BOMBED IN BOSTON & FELL FLAT ON MY FACE AT CMU I HAD ONLY TO WRITE MY CUSTOMER OF PAGE LETTER & I FELT BETTER IMMEDIATELY.

HE DIDN'T ANSWER ME THAT LETTER, WHAT COULD HE HAVE SAID, HIS SILENCE TOLD ME A LOT. IT MADE ME THINK & REALIZE & LOOK AT MYSELF OBJECTIVELY. IT WAS ENOUGH THAT HE HAD LISTENED.

IN JULY I WROTE HIM & TOLD HIM ALL ABOUT MY NEW YORK TRIP & HOW I MET GEORGE SEGAL & WENT TO MAMA LEONE'S. I RANDED ON & ON IN BUBBLING, SPARKLING ENJOYMENT OF LIFE. I ASKED HIM ABOUT THE LATE ROBERT WALKER WHO HAD ONCE BEEN MARRIED TO JENNIFER JONES & HE WAS KIND ENOUGH TO SEND ME BACK A LONG LETTER TELLING ME MUCH MORE THAN I'D WANTED TO KNOW. HE WAS SO BUSY, SO INVOLVED IN LIFE & YET HE ALWAYS HAD TIME FOR ME, A GOONY LITTLE GIRL WHO WROTE SUCH MUSHY, NAIVE LETTERS.

I DEPENDED ON HIM SO MUCH BECAUSE HE UNDERSTOOD; BECAUSE, THOUGH HE NEVER ^{Really} COMPLIMENTED ME, HE ALWAYS SAID LITTLE THINGS LIKE, 'YOUR BUBBLING ENTHUSIASM FOR LIFE IS CONTAGIOUS' OR 'IT WAS GOOD HEARING FROM YOU, IT ALWAYS IS' THAT MADE ME FEEL LIKE A PERSON, A GOOD PERSON, SOMEONE OF WORTH. HE WAS STILL A LITTLE BOY AT HEART, HE NEVER LOST A CHILD'S WONDER OF LIFE & HE MADE AS MUCH MAGIC OUT OF LIVING AS HE FOUND IN IT. HE HAD SUCH AFFECTION FOR PEOPLE, FOR STARS, FOR MOVIES & THE THEATRE. HE LOVED THE TORNANT COZINESS OF OLD FILMS & OLD TIMES & HE FOUND SUCH A JOY, A LITTLE BOY'S GLEE IN GOING TO MOVIES & BASKING IN THE MYSTERY & MAJESTY OF LIFE.

I ALWAYS FELT SO SPECIAL BECAUSE I KNEW HAROLD V. COHEN & IN KNOWING HIM I KNEW THE WORLD AS WELL. I'D READ HIS COLUMN WITH ITS EXCITING ~~insights~~ ^{insights} INTO PEOPLE & FEEL THAT ALL THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE HE WROTE ABOUT WERE MY DEAREST FRIENDS. HIS WORDS ON JUDY GARLAND'S DEATH WERE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL I'VE EVER READ & I TOLD HIM SO IN BRILLIANT, OVERLY-DRAMATIC PHRASES OF PRAISE. HE SIMPLY SAID 'THANK-YOU' & EVEN THAT HE MADE SO BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE I KNOW HE MEANT IT.

I RECEIVED HIS LAST LETTER YESTERDAY MORNING, PROBABLY NO MORE THAN ~~48~~ ⁴⁸ HRS. AFTER HE DIED. WHEN MY MOTHER TOLD ME HE HAD DIED

I SOMEHOW KNEW THE LETTER WOULD BE DOWN THERE IN THE MAILBOX. I JUST KNEW. IT WAS THE WEIRDEST SENSATION, THIS KNOWING. I WALKED DOWNSTAIRS IN A DAZE, TOOK THE LETTER IN THE LAUNDRY & BURST INTO TEARS. I HAD WRITTEN HIM HIS ANNUAL BIRTHDAY LETTER & HAD INCLUDED SOME COMPLAINTS ABOUT PITT & HOW DISAPPOINTED I WAS WITH IT. BUT THEY WERE FUNNY COMPLAINTS. I WROTE ABOUT THE BEATLES AGAIN FOR SOME REASON. I RAMBLLED ON ON ABOUT HOW FULFILLING THE CONCERT WAS & HOW EXCITED MY GIRLFRIEND & I WERE, SCREAMING & CRYING OUR HEADS OFF WITH HYSTERICAL HAPPINESS. I TOLD HIM HOW I HAD ADORED HIM FOR HANDING ME MY DREAM. AND THEN I WROTE, 'IT SOMEHOW SEEMED IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO KNOW THAT I STILL REMEMBER YOUR KINDNESS & CARE FOR YOU BECAUSE OF IT.' NOW I REALIZE WHY IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR HIM TO KNOW

HIS REPLY WAS JUST WRITTEN ON FRIDAY. IT WAS SIMPLE & SHORT & CUT RIGHT INTO ME. HIS LAST SENTENCE WAS: 'AS LONG AS YOU ARE COMPLAINING IN SUCH AN AMICABLE WAY I KNOW ALL IS WELL WITH YOU & I AM CONTENT.' IT WAS HIS OWN QUIET WAY OF TELLING ME HE CARED ABOUT ME BUT 'KILLING ME TO THINK THOSE POST-GAZETTE ENVELOPES WITH 'HVC' SCRAWLED ACROSS THE CORNER WILL NEVER COME AGAIN. HE WAS MY SANTA CLAUS & NOW HE'S GONE. NO ONE WILL EVER UNDERSTAND ME IN QUITE THE SAME, BEAUTIFUL TOLERANT WAY. THERE IS NO ONE TO LISTEN OR TO HOLD MY DREAMS IN THEIR HANDS ANYMORE. PLEASE ACCEPT MY SORROW, & MY THANKS FOR ALL THE BEAUTY HE GAVE ME. HE WAS MY FRIEND.

Sincerely yours,
Annie Fitzgerald