

Joe Adams—*Ave atque vale*

I first met Joe at a Continuing Education workshop with Barry and Lyn Luft, some 12 or so years ago. My memory is quite clear, because I remember his autoharp—it was the oldest I had ever seen—and also I was recovering from an illness, and was so relieved to be a part of the music scene again.

Now, "folk people" always bump into each other again and again, attending the same functions, folk clubs, house concerts, &c., so Joe and the people who are my good friends today were no exception. We had the common bond of music, and our group became close. We worked together on *Bulletin* mailouts, attended concerts, pot luck suppers—always with music afterwards. We even celebrated our birthdays together. We were a family.

I remember Joe bringing to me a pile of yellowed newspaper clippings—words of songs he had saved from years ago. He asked if I could use any of the songs, for by then we were enthusiastic members of the Singers' Circle, performing music and songs for each other once a month. We also enjoyed our weekly jam session with a small group. I realized Joe was really serious about collecting and loved the music deeply.

You never knew what to expect from Joe at The Circle. Sometimes a really profound song, or perhaps one that was just plain silly and funny. When he first sang one of his own songs, we were so impressed; we hadn't even known this talent existed. I thought his songs were so honest, and with strong visual images.

Another part of Joe that made us deeply respect him was his attitude to his illness. He accepted it with dignity and great courage. I know I can feel sorry for myself at times, but I never

heard Joe complain. It was so difficult to stand back and not help him get up from the chair, or put on his jacket. Sometimes he might just allow a little assistance from one of us, casually given, but for the most part we had to let him do it for himself—he was such a strongly independent man.

Every year, at Christmas time, we all gather at James Prescott's house. Whatever the weather, we wander around the neighbourhood singing Christmas carols, returning to the house to feast on James's famous hot soup and fruit salad, supplemented with a small donation of party food from each person. It is a special time. Joe used to brave the elements, although we knew the snow and cold stiffened him, causing pain, and icy sidewalks were difficult to negotiate, but he came anyway. Later, when he could only manage part of the walk, other people

cared for him so much that someone would always accompany him back to the house early, to help prepare the table for the others.

I visited Joe in hospital on many occasions, and sometimes wondered how he would ever recover. Somehow he always did, and then carried on as usual. This last time, we both knew it was different. I am so glad I was able to tell him how much we all loved him. I am positive he has found peace and, at last, freedom from pain. Joe's wife, family, pets and friends were of prime importance to him, but I feel his love of music gave him the energy

to cope with life. With others, I will try to keep his songs alive. I will never forget him, and was so honoured to be one of his friends.

*-Daphne Rackstraw
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Daphne Rackstraw and Joe Adams jamming, November 1991