



A few messages received after the book was printed:

Clark, Sue

Hello Judi -

I am Sue Clark. I met you in 1988 at the Montreal American Psychiatric Association (APA) conference in May at the Survivor Day. I also met you at the Ontario Psychiatric Survivor Alliance (OPSA) conference in the early 90s in Toronto. You may not remember me but I remember you. Your work and book has been an inspiration for me.

I am now the director of the International Campaign to Ban Electroshock (ICBE) [www.intcamp.wordpress.com]. I found out about recent your blog from www.mindfreedom.org. Your blog has made me aware of the issues you are facing now. I commend you for the work you have done for psychiatric survivors and you are one of my heroes. Thank you for all you have done for so many people for so many years.

I just wanted to tell you that.

Regards, Sue

Ottawa, Canada

Ebba

love from Iceland

Dear Judi.

This is Ebba from Iceland. Hope told me about you and I looked at your homepage.

It is good that you are taken good care of and you decide what you want. Hope gave me your book "On our own" when I started to work at the psyk hospital in 1981. I was 25 years old then. I think that book started a process in me. I did not take anything for granted what people said about mental illness after I read the book. I decided very early to take a stand. And my stand was to listen to the people I worked with and try to do my best to do what they wanted me to help them with. That meant that I often had to be against my college. There have been tears and there have been laughs. I don't regret any of it. I had to stop working in the hospital last year because I myself was getting sick being in that environment that I did not believe helped people in crises. It took me another 25 years to be able to fight with heavy arms for what I believe in.

You have written and said a lot of important things but I will try to remember one thing that you have said and that is never to give up until people with mental health problems have full human rights.

Maybe it will take longer than my life, but I want you to know that you have had a major impact on my thinking and I am so thankful that you were with us here in Iceland and spread your seeds.

Take care and I send my best wishes to you.

Ebba

Kovary, Myra

Dear Judi (and Marty),

I'm sorry I won't be able to join you for your celebration on August 20th. What a great idea to have this celebration while you are alive and able to soak up the accolades from your friends, family, and colleagues! I was very happy that I was able to spend some time with you in late March. And, I'm very happy that you are still on this planet. I read your blog quite often and am immensely appreciative of your efforts to share your life/end of life with so many of us in this way. Marty must be one of the true angels! I didn't get to meet him in March, but I honor his love and commitment to you.

Thank you for your bravery -- in outing yourself as a survivor of the psychiatric system and for sticking to your principles for all these years as a vocal opponent of forced mental health "treatment". You are definitely one of the beacons of light in the mad movement. When that light goes out, we will miss you -- but we will carry on. I hope that is a meaningful tribute to you and to the work you have done.

Sending my love and all my best for a peaceful journey into the unknown,

Myra

Kruszewski, Stefan

David Oaks gave me your email address. I wanted to share with you what I wrote to David earlier today...Big hugs...Stefan

I just read Judi's two most recent pieces/blogs. Please let her know that she is inspiring. She is facing, proactively, something that we all face. I think that her courage and her willingness to share herself in this way is incredibly beautiful. If as a non-believer (she, not me), please let her know that she is in the thoughts, meditations and prayers of me and my family.

Sincerely,

Stefan P. Kruszewski, M.D., OD

Board Certified in Adult, Geriatric, Adolescent and Addiction Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania





Pelka, Fred

Dear Judi,

You probably don't remember me, considering how many interviews you've done these past years, and how many hundreds and thousands of conversations you must have had. I interviewed you on maybe three or four occasions, for a variety of articles and projects. The first time was maybe a dozen years ago when I was researching my first book, and the last time was I think two years ago, for this oral history project I've been working on these past couple of years. On every occasion you were so gracious, not to mention so generous with your time. I remember asking you a lot of questions about your life and the psychiatric survivor movement, and we talked about politics and history and such.

I believe I told you that I am myself a psychiatric survivor, but I doubt I told you what your book and what your work have meant to me all these years. First of all, I'm always a little hesitant to discuss my own biography or history, since my job more or less is to get people talking about theirs. Second, it seemed rather bad form at the time, as if I was gushing or whatever—I thought probably you'd just be embarrassed and then I'd feel embarrassed myself, and well, the long and short of it is I kept pretty mum about my own experiences, at least that's how I remember it. Then I received this e-mail from Freedom Center saying you were hoping to hear from folks, "old friends, as well as from people whom I haven't met on a personal level but have interacted with at conferences and the like," and I figured I fell into the category of "and the like."

Anyway, the short form of the story is that I was hospitalized at age eighteen in a state psychiatric center in western New York at the very beginning of my freshman year of college, in 1972. The diagnosis at the time was schizophrenia, among other things, but that wasn't the problem at all. The problem was that I'd come from a home where my mother was dying of cancer, and my father was an abusive alcoholic, and the both of them were trauma survivors (dad spent six years in the Gulag, mom survived air raids and other wartime horrors). My older brother too was experiencing his own problems – having been drafted and sent to Vietnam, where he was severely wounded and has lived with a disability ever since. The weird (but entirely typical) thing about all this was no one would discuss any of these things out loud, and so I had no language in which to frame what was happening to me, and what I saw happening to my family. Instead, my more or less frantic cries for help and attention were treated as "symptoms" of some mysterious, underlying "illness" which of course could only be "treated" through hospitalization and medication. When these didn't work—when in fact they only made me feel worse—I experienced the crushing depression that comes with being totally unable to understand, let alone change, the circumstances driving me to do and say desperate things.

Reading your book then was quite an awakening! For the first time in years I began to question the reality of my diagnosis, and consider that instead of being symptoms of illness, what I was experiencing and how I was reacting were entirely understandable, given my emotions of deep grief, loss, and confusion that were the very natural result of growing up as I did, and under those circumstances.

On Our Own was the turning point in my understanding of all this, in realizing that, for me at any rate, this notion that I had a "mental illness" was a dead end, doing much more harm than good. Your book, which laid out your own story – so different from mine but also in some ways so very similar – was the key that turned the lock in my head. So I wanted to thank you for that, from the bottom of my heart.

It was a pleasure talking with you, even during the brief times we spent together. I have nothing but fond feelings for you, deep respect for your work, and tremendous gratitude that you were willing and able to share your experiences and insights with us all. A contribution such as yours is impossible to measure, but I'm sure I speak for very many people when I say you have made a profound difference in this world.

Best wishes to you and your family, and may a sense of deep peace and love go with you always.

Yours truly,

Fred Pelka

Florence, Massachusetts

Rosenbloom, Charles

I met you decades ago in "the movement". I too am an atheist and hope to have your courage when I face death. I remember you as a wonderful person.

