

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to Joany, my lifelong friend and tennis partner and my wife of fifty years. We had the extraordinary good luck to meet in Cap-à-L'Aigle, where our families spent their summers, when I was six and she was five. I had befriended a boy named Ted Robb, who was visiting his relations, and Joany was one of his cousins. The recollection of that first meeting, which took place at the Manoir swimming pool, is vivid to me and very vague to her. We met again on the tennis courts of the Murray Bay Golf Club seven years later, when we began a tennis partnership that grew into a decades-long romance. In those days, while our early common interest was tennis, Joany was also a good downhill skier. She seduced me up the hills of the Laurentians and taught me how to get to the bottom, albeit without her grace and speed.

After graduating from Kings Hall Compton, Joany entered the Montreal General Hospital School of Nursing in 1952. She was following in the footsteps of her grandmother, Isabelle Hampton Robb, who had been the first director of nursing of the John Hopkins School in Baltimore and was the founder of the American Journal of Nursing and of several nursing associations. A very good student, a sympathetic listener, a gardener with an extraordinary green thumb and an enthusiastic cheerleader for her family and friends, Joany has been an inspiration and model for us all.

On the occasion of Joany's seventieth birthday, Janyne Hodder, at the time the principal of Bishop's University, wrote the following to her on behalf of the university:

You have the great gift of making everyone feel special, of always finding the right words and of warming the day of everyone who meets you. Kind and funny, gentle and wise, Bishop's First Lady is first in our hearts.

The faculty and staff of Bishop's University admire you greatly and appreciate your support of our events, from football games to Convocation.

At a more personal level, Gary [Janyne's husband] and I have always appreciated your support and your friendship. We admire your ability never to be taken aback even by the oddest circumstances – of which admittedly we have seen a few – and your ability to bring out the best in everyone and be the first to see it.

For my part, I tried to convey what Joany meant to me in a poem I wrote for her ten years earlier, on her sixtieth birthday:

Here's to my bride Joany on her sixtieth
(24/06/93)

Here's to the girl of my dreams,
My tennis partner, my wife.
Here's to the girl I have shared,
With four kids and a dog all my life.

Here's to the girl of today,
Athlete, gardener and cook.
As pretty at sixty as five,
I invite you to all take a look.

Here's to you all who have joined us,
From the south, the east and the west,
You all love Joany a lot,
But I think I love her the best.

Alex

Lastly, a word about our family. Sports may have brought Joany and me together, but our most compelling shared interest over the years has been our four children – Robb, Tim, Angie, and Alex. Collectively, throughout our married life, they have given us more pleasure than we could have imagined. Some readers may wonder why I have not written more about my children in this book. The answer is simple. They are just in the middle of their lives, and describing them now would be like describing a half-finished symphony. They have already made their respective marks in the theatre (Robb), in business (Tim), in the community (Angie), and in education (Alex). In the fullness of time, I hope that they will complete my memoirs by writing their own.