

**Jane Rule**  
RR # 1, S19, C17  
Galiano, B.C., V0N 1P0

April 29, 1997

Dear Carolyn:

It was lovely to have your note. Actually my birthday was on the 28th of March, marking my first year as an old age pensioner, all clawed back at income tax time! Still I can ride the ferries free on week days, and my drug bill is a tenth of what it was.

Yes, we are into real if overly wet spring, tulips and rhododendrons and iris charming us at the moment. We started the long job of cleaning up the pool on the 14th, and today for the first time it's blue rather than green but still a bit merky and very cold, 55 degrees this morning when we were cleaning it, but the sun is shining, and both the roof and the heat pump are on. Some years we've had a swim the last day of April, but given the less than perfect weather report for the rest of the week and our older bones, I doubt we'll manage it this year. Last year it was the 1st of June before the weather cleared for swimming, a whole month lost. What gives me easy patience this year is the use of Galiano's only indoor pool over on Sticks Alison Road. We've been swimming in it three times a week since last October, missing only the snowed in time after Christmas. So we'll swim tomorrow anyway, just not in our own pool. The people who own it are going to Germany for a month on the 8th of May and shutting it down for that time (no wonder, it costs about \$10 a day to heat it!) I think we'll be ready to swim outdoors by then.

I've been involved in exploring possibilities of affordable housing here on the island for over a year now, first heading a committee to write a report which was presented to the community in December, now heading one that is going about the business of turning itself into a society with all the tedious constitution writing, government registering and so on. When we become official some time next month, I'll add a few more members and begin the more interesting business of figuring out how to get a pilot project started. We think we have a gift of land less than half way up the island. What we'd like to do is build several modest houses for sale to people who agree to resell for only what they paid, plus improvements, if any. The land would belong to the society. It still wouldn't be cheap, but it would be within range of a two income family. I am hoping once a project actually gets going, I can turn it all over to someone else.

What I'm toying with is the idea of publishing. I've been so angry at the policy of more and more publishers to refuse first novels, no matter how good, that I thought I might publish a few myself. I have a friend here on the island who is a computer whiz and interested in exploring the idea with me. I have to be convinced I can market a book well enough not to provide it simply with a public grave. I have no notion of making any money, only hope I might lose little enough to do it again, and then maybe again. We have thought of calling it First Press, and Helen says our logo should be a wine bottle. I have a novel in mind written by a white heterosexual male friend here on the island. I know how politically incorrect that will seem to a lot of people. I also know that, once I announce the intention of publishing first novels, I'll be buried in

manuscripts. I've been tossing the idea around for some time, and I may, as I get nearer to getting my feet wet, back off.

Helen has given her car to Avis who now does all the driving we need and it's a relief to me that she could decide to do it before her less certain attention got her into trouble. She's having a hard time with the limitations of age, the uncertain balance, the poor present memory, deafness. She does best in a quiet, routine day. We have fewer house guests, read more aloud. Our younger local friends have taken to inviting themselves to dinner at our house for which they bring and prepare the food and clean up afterwards. We couldn't be in a better place to suit our frailties.

I got down to see Mother for a long weekend in February. She's planning to drive up with my sister and her now very frail husband. If they manage it (it's the third time they've planned it, David's heart attacks canceling the other two), Mother will stay with us, and they'll go on to Vancouver Island for a few days. I'm not sure how well I'll manage both Mother and Helen, but I'll get help if I need to. September is still a long way off.

Look out for Elzbeth Cameron's No Previous Experience, due out in May. I think it will cause something of a stir. I'm struggling through Fugitive Pieces for the occasional brilliant image and wonderous insight. Why poets think they can write novels without any narrative command I don't know. Peggy's the exception.

I hope one book or another will eventually bring you back into our part of the world.

Love,

Jane