



Barbara Stoppel was born on August 9, 1965. She would have turned 52 this year. So it seems fitting to honour that day by bringing this story to life and releasing Chapter 1 of a book that will finally put to rest the lingering questions about her murder — and who did it.

The purpose of this book is not to lay blame on others although the shortcomings of the investigation will be revealed. There is no malice in my intentions merely a desire to share the truth.

Policing is a human process and as such is subject to all the frailties of the human mind. We are human and we make mistakes. What we do with these mistakes sets us apart from each other in the attribute of integrity. Are we “seekers” of the truth or “keepers” of it?

This book could not have been written without the support of both the Stoppel and Sophonow families. It has been an honour to know them. Their cooperation has helped in the the recreation of the events that resulted in the wrongful conviction of one innocent for the taking of another. So has court documents, transcripts, police reports, interviews and other public information that reveal the ingredients for gross injustice, the consequences of inaction, and the challenge to be accountable.

I was also privileged to work along side Detective Sergeant Bob Legge who shared my frustrations. Moreover I had the opportunity to collaborate with Suzanne Wilton formally of the Calgary Herald. Together we focussed on the common path of exposing the evil that was allowed to flourish for far too long.

I will confide in you everything that I know about this case. Judge me not until the end and forgive me if I could have done more. In writing this I decided to not go gently into that good night.

Too often we forget that every murdered person has a family and a future that is taken from them. They also have a story, this is hers.

“There is only one thing
That is close to my heart,
The love between friends
Hoping never to part

Someone caring and close
And to my heart is dear
Because of a friend I’ve lost
On my page drops a tear.

When the two of us met
I could tell from the start,
You’d become a good friend
And close to my heart.

But between us came a boy
And we forgot we were friends

I cry when I remember
For our friendship now ends.

I thought that maybe
We could try again,
But it seems that you don't want to
How I feel such stinging pain!

I still hope that we can become
Close friends once more,
Because without you my heart bleeds
And from it tears pour.

(Barb Stoppel, 16 years old, Grade 9)