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COMMENTARY

Tribute to Jack and Cheryl Taunton Sally Jackson and Ross Jackson*

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Abstract

This article reflects the close and long-term friendship between Canadians, Cheryl and Jack Taunton, and Kiwis, Sally and Ross Jackson, with its beginnings based on running. The article includes shared memories and celebrates the mutual contribution of Cheryl and Jack to their professional success. **Health & Fitness Journal of Canada 2020;13(4):30-32.**

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Introduction

We are lifelong and very close friends of Jack and Cheryl and honoured to be invited to contribute to this dedicated special series. We have grown alongside Jack and Cheryl on their life journey and are in awe of their joint achievements, both personal and professional.

We are both Kiwis and live in Wellington, New Zealand. As young marrieds, in 1973, we headed off on our OE (Overseas Experience – a rite of passage for many young Kiwis) and travelled to Vancouver as landed immigrants.

1973 was at the time when running was becoming fashionable! Ross was an active marathoner and, in our first week in Vancouver, while staying in a small hotel in the West End, a fellow Kiwi athlete, Cam Murray, who was a close friend and fellow student at Simon Fraser University with Jack and Cheryl, called to see us. He arranged for Ross to meet a group of distance runners who met at Brockton Oval

at 9 am on Sunday morning and specifically, Jack Taunton. We only knew elderly uncles called Jack so we were rather unsure about who we were going to meet.

The runners completed a regular Sunday 2-3 hour approximately 20-mile run, which is a standard Sunday morning training session amongst distance runners. Jack invited us to come to lunch with Cheryl and him in their apartment on Harwood Street. This was our first experience of a Canadian lifestyle and the beginning of a very close and special friendship for the past 47 years.

During our time together, we have created a wealth of many happy memories. We could spend many evenings recounting funny stories of happenings that have occurred as we have travelled together, run together, played together, become parents together, grown children together into adulthood, and then become grandparents together! Of course, the stories have become embellished over the years but

Tribute to Jack and Cheryl

there is a definite grain of truth to most of them!

Our first trip to Europe on \$10 a day saw the four of us sharing one single bed and a chair on our first night in Paris; Jack experiencing his first (and seemingly not too pleasant) taste of an anchovy on an authentic pizza; the street vendor selling newspapers screaming at Jack for going back each day to “read” (unpaid of course) the latest foreign version of the results of Le Tour de France starring Eddie Merckx; the German Frau looking for “the boys” who were skulking not wanting to eat the tough breakfast bread; the long distance races where the laps were called out in German (except Jack and Ross didn’t know how to count in German); and all the time relentlessly running to build up the mileage to be able to compete at the highest level.

We have subsequently shared travel in Turkey, Syria, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand. Memories of hurtling down seven vehicle “highways” in Syria (i.e., seven modes of transport across one road!) to visit our mutual friends Wendy and Jim Scorgie, terrifying security checks at the borders, the soldiers’ graves at Gallipoli and Chunuk Bair, the Wickaninnish Inn and ice hockey with the locals at Tofino, the vineyards and the sun in the Okanagan, the Olympic facilities at Whistler, the little beachside town of Waikanae in New Zealand where we were introduced to the Kardashians, and excitement in the library! So much to share and reflect on!

Jack and Cheryl are overwhelmingly generous in all aspects of their lives. They have shared not only their time, their knowledge, their wisdom with us, but also their family across generations. As “new settlers” we learned about turkey dinners, Grey Cup celebrations, Thanksgiving, Halloween – with outstanding hospitality

from Jack and Cheryl, their parents, and siblings. Our home in New Zealand has many highly memorable Canadian treasures given to us over time by Jack and Cheryl. They are always in our sight!

Their legendary generosity and hospitality have extended to not only our children, Trudi and Ben (who at times have moved in and lived with Jack and Cheryl!) but also to any visiting Kiwis who have had their address. Right across New Zealand there are runners and others who will all speak of the amazing time that Jack and Cheryl have provided in the spirit of true cross-cultural friendship.

We are forever proud of the amazing contribution to sports medicine that Jack has made and been recognized for but having been very closely associated with Cheryl and Jack, we know he would not have achieved that without Cheryl. From the very early days when Cheryl drove Jack so that he could study, eat, sleep, and run through to providing his technology back up, developing his PowerPoints, proof reading and editing presentations, Cheryl’s selflessness and her own high level of intelligence have enabled Jack to be the Superman that he has become. Cheryl’s similar contributions to the successful personal and professional careers of the Taunton daughters, Kristen and Carla, have enabled a rich family life, characterized again by the family generosity and hospitality. With three acknowledged doctors in the Taunton family, Cheryl’s ability, support, and determination have been, and continue to be, hugely influential in the achievement of all three.

Alongside many, many others we are privileged to count Jack and Cheryl as true friends. Despite their achievements they remain humble, considerate, always concerned for others, and focused on continuing to make a difference wherever

they can for whoever needs them. Our lives are richer for knowing them.

Authors' Qualifications

The authors' qualifications are as follows:
Sally Jackson Manager, Ministry of Education, New Zealand; Ross Jackson Landscape Architect, Greater Wellington Regional Council, New Zealand.