

## Tribute to a Social Worker

By Jason Oldford

I often ask myself the question “Where are they now?” about people who’ve had a huge impact on my life. One of these people was Dr. Terez Retfalvi, one of my caseworkers during my childhood. One day earlier this year I asked that question about her and was surprised to find out that she had passed away. It happened in June 2020.

When I was diagnosed I was living in Moncton, NB in the early 70s, at a time when not much was known about autism. My family and I were in the process of moving to Fredericton, where I currently live. A child psychologist in Moncton did not give me a good prognosis, so my parents sought a second opinion. They got that when we arrived in Fredericton and that’s where Terez comes in.

When I got to Fredericton I began attending sessions with Terez at a mental health clinic. She played a huge role in my development and was part of a panel that studied my case and the panel’s prognosis—and specifically Terez’s—was much more optimistic than that given by the child psychologist in Moncton.

Most of this information I got from a letter my late father wrote me about 20 years ago, maybe more. One of the things he said was that my progress seems to have outperformed their expectations. I think Terez would agree; it wouldn’t be fair if I didn’t give her some of the credit for making me the person I am today. She’d be looking down right now and unequivocally approving of where I am and what I’ve done and where her other patients are and what they’ve done. If I had one last thing to say about her, it’d be that she was a true gift to the world of psychology.

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### About the Author

My name is Jason Oldford. I work as a translator for Lionbridge. I have been on the autism spectrum since the 1970s, and back then not much was known about autism. I learned to read by the time I turned three so I guess you could say I got a head start as I entered school. I was a year late doing that, but it was for the better.

Although I am one of your shy, introverted types of autistics, I do have a knack for memorizing things like license plate numbers, dates, facts and figures, and I fell in love with pop music at a young age. I love listening to countdown shows from the 80s, remembering the old songs, and being able to count them down from 20 to 1 with computer-chip accuracy (and remembering the numbers of some memorable tunes further down the charts).”