

September 9, 2001

Dear Mahra,

Forgive the delay in responding to your wonderful card and letter. What a happy surprise! Your letter came as I was orienting two new fulltime faculty members and just before Fall classes began (at present I am a Dept Chair and teaching as well). I really wanted to take the time to respond to you rather than just dash off a quick, 'thank you.'

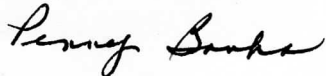
Mahra, I certainly do remember you and have thought of you often over the years. There was never any doubt in my mind that you would go on to successfully complete your formal education. What was more important to me was that you understood that true education is about embracing yourself and the formal aspect helps to shape and enhance what life is teaching you. Education is a lifelong journey. We go on integrating both the formal and the informal and delighting in the outcomes. It's never easy, and it hurts at times, as you and I well know, but it's so worth it, isn't it.

Your journey and mine are very similar. I pursued my formal education off and on and in the midst of personal crisis. I, too, couldn't get enough of all there was to learn. So, m'dear, it would appear that we are kindred spirits. What a delight! Pass it on! First to Quincy and your husband and then to the next young man or woman you encounter in whom you recognize that hunger for wisdom and truth. It did not begin with Gibran and will not end with you and I. We are all linked in this journey and it all began a "zillion" years ago deep in the human heart that recognized that we are so much more than we seem to be at any given moment. I know you understand this and it fills my heart with joy. The joy is based on the fact that the years go rushing by and class after

class pass through my care and I look to you and students like you who “get it” to continue passing on the “light” that illuminates the dark recesses of indifference and a willingness to settle only for mediocrity that ends in hearts burdened with haunting dissatisfaction that infects everyone they encounter, especially the young .

So, Mahra, in closing I want you to know what a special gift you are for having taken the time to let me know how things have developed for you. It was a kind and generous gesture that I will always cherish. Gibran and I are most pleased that You Have Become the Book!

With great affection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Penny Banks".

Professor Banks