

*Welcome to the Celebration of Life  
for*

*Christine Isobel Milner (nee Lee)*

*July 30, 1945 to July 15, 2007*

*At Chrissy's request the Celebration is being held at "Westwood" in  
Nelson's garden that she loved. It was to be her 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday party.*

*July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007 2 to 5 pm*

*"Memories of Chrissy and Magical Moments" begin at 3 pm*

*Be prepared to have fun! (orders from Chrissy)*



*Chrissy, age 12, Stanley Park, Vancouver, BC*

## The Amazing and Death-defying life of my sister Chrissy

Christine Isobel Lee was born in Calgary, July 30th, 1945. Our parents, Kit and Bessie Lee, were delighted with this blue eyed, blonde and beautiful baby. I was six and my sister, Betty, was 12 and as we already had a strong sense of sisterhood we welcomed our new sister. We lived in the bosom of a loving and slightly eccentric English family. On September 2nd, our safe world fell apart. Daddy and my 18 year old cousin, Johnnie, had built a sailboat they called Skylark. They took it out on its maiden voyage and both drowned. Chrissy would never know our playful, sweet, beloved father. For a time she lost our mother too. Mom and Daddy were very much in love and Mom grieved him deeply.

Chrissy was an impish, happy, delightful little girl. At the age of three she became ill with rheumatic fever, which was the start of 58 years of ill health (five bouts of rheumatic fever, bacterial endocarditis, two heart attacks, one stroke, two open heart surgeries, bipolar illness, deep paralysing depressions, two bouts of breast cancer, diabetes, hip replacement and finally the lung and bone cancer that ended her life). We were told many times she was dying and like the phoenix she rose again. She did it all with courage, feistiness, humour, outrageous remarks. She never complained. She never said “why me?” She said “why not me.” Chrissy had a zest for life that was infectious and lived her life with a great sense of adventure, passion, fearlessness and joy. She had no time for bullshit and phonies.

Chrissy loved to sing and had a good sense for jazz. She sang professionally in Guelph at clubs. She loved to sail and became Commodore of the Lower Mainland Yacht Co-op in 1982. She worked as a travel agent and travelled the world with great joy and curiosity. She sailed in the Bahamas for a year, returning tanned, healthy and full of “spit and vinegar” she said. All three sisters shared a deep love of Greece where I joined her in 1979 for an unforgettable adventure. Chrissy taught me how to have fun. I was a very sad and serious child after my father died. Chrissy was born knowing how to have fun. Life was always an exciting adventure with Chrissy.

Mom said she looked like Goldie Hawn. She also had the same essence,



a bit zany, fey and totally adorable. She had Goldie's essence but the eyes of Bette Davis, large and luminous. When she was a teenager a friend of hers, Mac Fish, nicknamed the Lee girls "the sisti-uglers" and it stuck all of our lives. When Chrissy was 13 she met Jane Roberts and they became "best friends". They were zany, wild, outrageous, smart as whips, and funny as hell. Together they were a force to be reckoned with. That friendship lasted 48 years and Jane was with her the last two days of her life. Chrissy had phoned her in Vernon and said "Get your butt out here" and she did.

Chrissy married Mike Milner when she was 19. They were both very young and the marriage didn't last but Mike wrote to us recently that "Chrissy was one of my teachers and I am now missing her more than ever. She will always be part of me." Much later, on May 29th, 1998 she met Jay Smith. He was walking through the field behind her house and she thought he looked like an "interesting man" and she went out to talk to him. They actually met by the stone cairn in the field and by the time they had finished chatting they had made a strong connection. Jay was impressed by her spirit, her sense of adventure and her wit. Chrissy was impressed by his moustache, big muscles, his love of books and his intelligence. She told Jay that a fortuneteller had predicted she would meet a logger who would become very important to her. Jay told her "I'm a logger." He also said, "I'm a little rough around the edges but maybe you can bring out the feminine side in me." And she did. Over the past nine years they've shared many joys and sorrows and always had a deep and committed love for each other. They loved to play Scrabble and Jay told me "Chrissy was a notorious cheat and I just let her do it." Jay took good care of her through many illnesses. He asked her to marry him several years ago. They planned to marry this past May 29th (anniversary of their meeting) but Jay had been hit by a car and severely injured on April 20th and Chrissy was very fragile. They delayed it but a few hours before she died she told Nelson and me that she was going to get out of the hospital and "go home tomorrow and marry Jay." I told her I would arrange it. Jay was with her just an hour before her death and they honoured their love and their life together. In their hearts they were already married.



Chrissy knew how to live in the moment as she always lived with death looking over her shoulder. That was another lesson she tried to teach me. She took delight in her family, dear friends and her many loyal dogs (Daisy, Buddy, Becky, Willy). She also loved being an aunt to Ruth, Chris, Colin, Lee, and Dan and then a great aunt to Braydon, Reese, Evan, Annika and baby Brooke. She had always wanted to have children and it was her greatest sorrow in life that her heart was so damaged that she couldn't carry a child. She was a loving, zany Auntie Mame kind of aunt and they brought her joy.

Chrissy was a feminist and social activist and worked in the U.S. for a church that was very involved in the civil rights movement and women's movement. All three sisti-uglers shared a passion for social justice and for the sisterhood of women. In 1983 we lost our dear older sister, Betty, to lung cancer, and a week later, our beloved mother, Bessie, to lymphoma. Chrissy said "Don't worry, Dorothy, I won't put you through another cancer journey. With my bad heart I'm going to go with a massive heart attack." When she found out she had lung and bone cancer in January she said sadly "I'm sorry, Dorothy, I didn't want to put you through another cancer journey." I hugged her tiny, ravaged body and replied, "It's okay, we'll do this journey together, that's what sisti-uglers do."

Chrissy had a courageous and life-affirming spirit. Even when ill and in great pain she would cheer other people up with her outrageous and witty remarks. Her last gift to us was just before she took her final breath. She opened her beautiful Bette Davis eyes and said to the nurse, Rose, "I am so happy that my family was with me." She took one small breath and slipped away. I brushed her beautiful hair back over the pillow, kissed her, told her I loved her and put my hand on that mighty heart that had finally stopped beating. As Rose and I took off Chrissy's multitude of bangles, rings and necklaces, I remembered that Chrissy had wanted her eyes to go to help someone. And they did. That was her final gift, the gift of sight.

Chrissy's spirit is on a new journey. A journey that is free of pain and suffering. She is with all of our loving spirits, Daddy, Mom, Betty and many others that have gone before and they have surrounded and embraced her with their love. She is safe now. And for those of us who need her she will become our spirit guide.

So, dear family and friends, as directed by Chrissy "have some fun" today as we celebrate her amazing life.

With love to all,  
Dorothy Beavington (the last sisti-ugler)

*Excerpts from letter written by Chrisy (age 36) in May, 1982, just before her second open heart surgery. In 1974 she had a Teflon and steel valve, which we nicknamed "Charlie", put in to replace her severely damaged mitral valve. Charlie malfunctioned and now they were replacing him with "Miss Piggy", a porcine valve which amazed all of us by lasting 25 years. "That was one strong pig," we'd say.*

Dorothy,

If by some strange fluke/you know. My will and insurance policy is in the gray metal box. Nothing fancy. Have it the way you want. Let's hope this can be laughed about later. Not much to give. If something does happen, I've had much more than I ever imagined I would. You know that I didn't use the time as well as I might have but I struggled and changed and grew.

I love you and your family so much and they gave me a lot during these years I never thought I'd have. I'll miss seeing baby. [I was pregnant. Dan was born July 3rd.] Be happy. I hope Betty will be happy and Ruth Anne. It's the one thing we can't get out of. I'd like more time certainly. We always do. Sucking in that air right up to the end but it's been good and I'm not sorry. My friends may want something of mine, tokens. Help someone. Cremation and my ashes over the seas sound good.

Tell Chris to open up and love. I know how sensitive and beautiful he is. Colin, our spiritual leader. What a bright light he is. Lee, the dynamo kid and the yet to be discovered, I suspect, mellow side of your new life with Nelson. The renaissance.

I believe in God and an afterlife now so perhaps that will make it easier. Everyone did what they could. I did what I thought was right too even though it was hard for me. [She had vowed she'd never go through another open heart surgery, and did so very reluctantly.] Give them what parts they need for other people. My Bette Davis eyes. Keep it simple but fun. I haven't had fun for awhile [she'd just had a second heart attack and a stroke.] Have some fun.

I'll have to make up a new one now. [We had talked that day about her needing a new life script if she survived the surgery because she had always been told she would die young and if she lived she would have to revise that script to lead a longer life.]



Chrissy wrote this letter to our mother when she was eight and in the Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary with another bout of rheumatic fever. Chrissy already hated hospitals and had refused to go this time. She really wanted a bike and Mom didn't have the money to buy one. To get Chrissy to go in she promised her a bike. The bribe worked and my sister reluctantly went to hospital.

This letter was written about two weeks later in a desperate attempt to get Mom to take her home. Chrissy ended up staying at Holy Cross for eight months that time. She calculated recently that she had spent almost eight years of her life in hospitals. She was always trying to get out. She wanted to die at home and all of us, including Dr. Perold, tried to make that possible. She only spent the last 24 hours of her life in hospital. When Dr. Perold came in that last day she told him "I want to go home". He promised her he would do his best to make that happen. She then talked about getting out the next day. Her plans were to "marry Jay" and "eat a hot dog".

Dorothy

X O X O  
X O X O  
X O X O

If you get me out of the hospital, you hadn't haved to buy me a bike. I'm home sick. That's why I threw up.

Love  
Chrissie

XOXO  
XOXO  
XOXO

If you get me out of  
the hospital, you ~~don't~~  
hadn't have to bury me  
aside. I ~~have~~ I'm ~~home~~  
sick. That's why I threw  
up.

Love,

Christie

