

# **Matthew's Celebration of Life**

## **By Tom Banks**

To Brittany & Logan, Joshua, Declan, Madison, Trish, John, Inge, Michael and all the Loh and Stewart families, I extend my deepest condolences and sympathy for the passing of Matt.

For those who do not know me I am Tom Banks, a long-time friend of Matt, and this is my wife, Mary Lou. I don't recall meeting Matt for the first time, but it was soon after he moved to Calgary and we met while attending Sir Winston Churchill high school. After graduating high school, we both entered Engineering at the University of Calgary, and it was there we became best friends. We spent a lot of time together as we worked hard and played hard, as the saying goes.

Early in university I recall Matt decided to have a party and show us how to cook Chinese food. We ended up quite sauced. The next day I went and had a tee shirt made with the words "Bok Choi Forever".

At the end of university, Matt and Trish started a family, Brittany was born and later Joshua, who is my godson. Since I did not have children at the time, "before children" or "BC" as I call it, I spent a lot of time going to their house in McKenzie. Matt and Trish were always generous and treated me like family.

Another favourite story from this time is when Matt invited me to help his parents build their cabin in Whitefish. I ended up high-centering my Volkswagen van while backing up on the steep approach. My girlfriend at

the time was changing and I may have been distracted. Matt quickly hooked up a come-a-long winch to a tree to pull it out. As Matt began pulling the van, the tree was too small and bent over. In slow motion the van rolled sideways down the bank. It was a miracle it didn't roll over; I think Inge may have screamed.

In 1990 Matt stood up for Mary Lou and me as our Best Man. He arranged a surprize trip to Whitefish with the boys for a stag weekend. We had a lot of fun, and while nothing too extreme occurred, it took years for Mary Lou to find out the details.

Matt, Trish and their family spent some time living away New Orleans at first and then St. John's Newfoundland. While they were away we didn't spend as much time together, but as it is with your best buddy, you don't always need the time together, you just know they are there and that they understand. You pick up where you left off with ease.

The family ended up back in Calgary where they lived in Triwood, near us, and then Springbank. Declan and Madison were born in 2002 and Mary Lou and I enjoyed seeing them as they grew into the outstanding young people they are.

One of the characteristics I most admire about Matt was that, as an engineer, he was a great lateral thinker. He would never approach a problem straightforward but would always be thinking of a more creative way. We would often discuss his ideas; for instance, there was his foray into selling high end vitamins, and laser drill bits.

Matt was the quintessential “great guy”, a “great father” and a person who I always admired. He made friends quickly, always had a big smile and laughed easily. He would drop by to chat when he was in the neighbourhood. He was never shy about asking for help; like when we car pooled for months when he didn’t have a car. If he thought there was something I would find interesting, he never hesitated to call.

Over the decades, I never heard Matt say anything insulting about another person. The worst that Mary Lou and I could think of wasn’t even his own fault; Mary Lou and Trish refused to play bridge with Matt and I because we would not let them socialize during the game.

Matt’s passions were the passions of his family. He was heavily involved with the sports his family loves, and he gave to the community, and his church as well. He volunteered a large amount of his time to the activities of his children including hockey, ringette, soccer. When Brittany was diagnosed with cancer, he gave his full support, shaving his head, and he was already a supporter of the Ride for Cancer. His community involvement included being a long time Director of the Triwood Community Association, where he also enlisted me. Even after moving to Springbank, Matt would come back to Triwood, and we would scrape and flood the outdoor rink together.

Matt was a “giver” of himself, his wishes were the wishes of his family and their happiness. Matt’s pleasure was contributing to his community, his church, and sports. His pride was his family.

My heart aches at the loss of Matt. My solace is that Matt will always be there to ask me if there is a better way. He continues to be my inspiration, because of his unselfishness and dedication to others, especially his family.