

Eulogy

Elizabeth “Betty” Ann Mary Lovegren

August 12, 1944 – January 9, 2015

Elizabeth Ann Mary Lovegren, known to everyone as Betty, died at her home on January 9, 2015 at age 70. Betty was born on August 12, 1944 in Simpson Memorial Hospital, Edinburgh, Scotland to Joseph Ashley Planke and Olive Armitage Planke. Joseph was a mechanic in the Royal Canadian Air Force. He returned to Canada in 1945. Olive and baby Elizabeth joined him later, coming to Halifax, Nova Scotia aboard a Red Cross ship. They settled in a suburb of Toronto. Growing up in an alcoholic family, Betty left home at 18. In 1965 at age 21, Betty boarded an ocean liner with some friends to hitchhike around Britain and Europe. Starting off in Edinburgh, she worked and stayed with the Armitage clan to save money. The bold Miss Betty was in London during the height of the swinging 60's. She headed off on a year-long as she made new friends, visiting exotic destinations in Europe, the Near East and northern Africa.

Returning to Toronto, Betty managed clubs, tended bar and waitressed at the best of Toronto's legendary jazz clubs where she got to know some of the biggest names in jazz. Growing up in a house with fighting, alcohol, larceny and very little parenting, Betty and her sister both became pregnant within a year of each other. Mother Olive forced both girls, Betty at 23 and Cath at 18 to give up their children for adoption. Betty's bar experience led her to brilliantly create “Betty's Booze Can” (aka the BBC), an illegal, after-hours bar in the next apartment. The BBC was the perfect place for late night hangs with jazz musicians, bar folk, as well as comedians, actors, “rounders” and hookers. Sister Cath tended bar while Betty answered the door and decided who was allowed into her establishment. The BBC went on for years, every weekend 1AM to 6AM. Betty was busted a few times as a formality. Many cops loved to hang out there too. Betty had been dating the highly regarded musician, sax player, singer and composer/arranger, Don “DT” Thompson. He stepped in to tend bar as well. The BBC was the favorite hang out for famous celebrities like Stan Getz and Jim Carrey.

Betty and Cath moved from doing singing telegrams for someone else and in 1970 started their own successful company “Top Hat & Tails”. The sisters added many characters such as the Easter Bunny, the world's first Mrs. Claus, witches, tacky bride, bag lady, tuxedo show girl and the clowns “Dizzy Lizzy” & “Giggles”. They added face painting and balloon sculptures for kids parties. Betty kept the company running for years after Cath moved to California in 1986.

Mother Olive was divorced from Betty's father for many years and headed to California in 1978. She became a driver for blind therapist, John Eckert. They later married and the new step father adopted Elizabeth, Catherine, and brother Roy in an adult adoption. Still in Toronto, Betty and DT joyously became proud parents of Bud Powell Thompson in 1982. Betty loved being a mom and doted on Bud. Son Kevin Strooband located Betty in 1992 when he was 24. They began a wonderful 22 year relationship. By 1995 Betty and son Bud, having had enough of the Canadian winters, moved to sunny San Diego to join her sister. Betty joined Cath's business, clowning, doing characters at the San Diego Zoo and face painting at Seaport Village. Betty continued as Seaport Village's resident artist through 2014.

Betty realized she had a drinking problem and in October 1997 she became sober in AA. She drank a glass of wine at her nephews wedding on April 22, 2000. A relapse of “just 45 seconds”, she did not want to become a newcomer again. Bud convinced her to be honest and reset her sobriety date. Betty met Jon in late 2000. A sober AA with 11 years sobriety, he asked her to coffee the day Betty received her one year token in AA on April 22, 2001. She earned a 93.5 on a list of 100 items Jon wanted in a partner. Their storybook romance was underway and blossomed quickly.

Betty married Jon on June 15, 2002 in San Diego in a “barefoot wedding” on the beach along Mission Bay on a gorgeous sunny day. Betty got right in to being a stepmom, taking Jon’s boys to Hawaii so they could meet Jon at the end of the 2003 Transpac (LA-Honolulu) sailing race. Cath promised Betty she would take her to Paris if Betty was unmarried at 60. So, in 2004, Jon took Betty to Paris as part of an eighteen day trip through Italy and France. Many friends and acquaintances point to Jon and Betty as an inspiring example of enjoying life with each other. Jon and Betty maintained the aura of being in love as they truly were a good match and loved each other more the longer they were together. The romance lasted and grew into a marriage that was admired and envied. Betty remained active in AA. She typically went to between three and five meetings a week. Her work with others through sponsorship has helped more than a few recovering alcoholics. Her joy of life, positive outlook, and genuine personal warmth set her apart in all walks of life, personally and professionally

Betty’s favorite store was always AmVets. Her eye for treasures is unsurpassed. With her clown days behind her, Betty further developed her unique fashion style. Betty’s event booking business grew along with the marriage. Her meticulous attention to detail made both her artistry and performances first rate. She arrived early for gigs, demanded the best from her talent, and delivered the best to her clients. Betty does numerous characters and entertains as a “psychic” across the full range from traditional tarot, to more modern cards, palmistry, tea leaves, hydromancy and lipstick reading. Her readings are always positive and uplifting. At large events, limiting time with each person is a must. Betty mastered ending each individual session with the individual seemingly satisfied even when being “moved onward”.

In July 2011, Betty was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a rare, incurable, terminal blood cancer. She responded to targeted drug therapy and achieved remission by early 2012, but it only lasted until November 2012. Her battle with the myeloma continued through several relapses as she developed resistance to several treatment regimens. Except for period near her diagnosis and the eight weeks preceding her death, few people knew she was sick, much less fighting cancer and being under treatment about 80% of the time. At Betty’s fifth relapse, only one of the novel agent treatments for multiple myeloma remained unused, but she was further on the wrong side of the odds. Symptoms started to manifest while on the new treatment.

On Dec. 22nd, Betty’s oncologist suspended treatment as too dangerous. Her myeloma was out of control with no hope of stopping it. The prognosis: a few weeks to a few months. Jon called family members and told them the news. The focus became making memories. All of Jon and Betty’s local family joined them for Christmas dinner. At Papa Jon’s insistence, two grandchildren, born 11 days apart in the same hospital, whose mothers were cousins, and were nearly 8 years old sat at the same table for the first time. The family was now indeed a family. Son Kevin, Trish, and their 9-week old baby came from Canada so Betty could spend seven days with her newest granddaughter and say goodbye to Kevin. Betty declined quickly after their visit. Before she left us, she shared about her situation at AA meetings and always tied it to AA. She said she never had an urge to have a drink, drug, or smoke. Betty shared at a meeting on Dec. 28, just twelve days from the end and talked AA. On January 8, 2015, Betty began her departure and became increasingly nonresponsive. The family said their goodbyes and let Jon spend her last hours with him alone. She died peacefully at 2:45 a.m., January 9, 2015. She took her last breath in her dear husband’s arms.

Delivered at Betty’s Memorial – Celebration of Life by Frank Fernicola, Best Man at wedding, Betty’s dearest male friend, Jon’s dearest friend, and Jon’s sponsor