



REMEMBERING
Garry Robert Harkness
December 20, 1956 - July 21, 2020



It is with heavy hearts that we announce the sudden passing of Garry Robert Harkness. Garry was a Son, Brother, Father, Uncle, Nephew and a friend to many.

Garry was born in the 50's in Toronto, Ontario. This was a great time to be born. He lived with his brother Ken, his Mom and Dad Ken and Jessie, his Aunt Joan and Aunt Carolyn, Uncle Cecil and grandparents Sid and Connie. The neighbours all knew and supported each other and kids spent many hours outdoors exploring without constraint.

He was a boy scout as a kid and loved the great outdoors and sports. In High School he became Athlete of the Year for his success in Track & Field. He was a huge Toronto Blue Jays fan. He also learned to ski in Jr High School and encouraged the family to take up skiing with varying degrees of success. He could often be found fixing cars with his brother Ken. Garry enthusiastically cut grass and did general lawn maintenance for neighbours in Don Mills. He went on to start his own lawn maintenance business First Green Lawn Care.

Garry attended the Cartography program at Seneca College, which is where he realized his love of travel. He went on to work for a travel tour company that provided all inclusive ski trips to BC. He also travelled to Florida, Las Vegas, Washington DC, Ocean City, Cuba, Jamaica, and California.

At 25 years of age Garry received life-changing news when he was diagnosed with an Acoustic Neuroma Brain Tumour that had developed on the right side of his brain. Ground breaking Surgery would follow a few months later which left him with permanent hearing loss and a facial droop. Even when life brought him hardship he persevered with humour, grace and good nature.

He was a loving and caring father to his two boys. In the winter months, he would take them skating at the Thornhill pond or the local community centre and also enjoyed tobogganing. In the summer months, he would orchestrate Victoria Day fireworks for the neighbourhood, take bicycle rides with his boys and took road trips to Wasaga Beach, where he loved to be at the beach. He enjoyed participating in their school field trips.

In the late 90's, with the assistance of family from Ontario and BC Garry began

living in a supported group home then found work at McDonalds in Newmarket. He made many friendships in Newmarket, and he found a close friend in Debbie Locke and they supported each other through their challenges with mental health. Bob Munroe was a kind soul who befriended Garry and offered him support throughout the years right up until a few weeks before his passing.

His family facilitated Garry's move to BC in 2007, so he could receive an increased level of care. He participated in events organized by the Comox Valley Head Injury Society and volunteered at Comox Valley Therapeutic Gardens and the Snow to Surf sports event. He always had a smile to give.

He moved to Bills Place in Nanaimo BC, a home designed for people living with brain injuries, where he enjoyed field trips and doing odd jobs for the staff. His final move was to Serenity Place in Nanaimo, BC where he stayed until his passing, making more friends, helping staff, and going on outings with family.

In the later part of 2018 Andrew and Garry started communicating through letters exchanges in the mail. Andrew came from Ontario to visit his Dad. It was a Christmas miracle as it was the first time they were reunited after 20 years! It was a very moving time for both as they rekindled a strong and close relationship. This is something that Garry always wanted. They continued to see each and share regular conversations over the phone.

Garry received tremendous support from his family and friends. Everyone who met him commented on what a kind and gentle person he was. He had a great sense of humor and was a practical joker who loved to make people laugh.

Garry is survived by his sons Andrew (Anne) and Michael of Toronto, Ontario, who he loved dearly, Brother Ken (Martina) of Duncan, BC, along with his Sisters Kim (Ron) of Toronto and Valeri (Tom) of the Comox Valley.

Garry will be missed by his nieces and nephews April (Stephen), Brendan, Alysha (Chris), Shane (Olivia), Josh and Great Nephew Sam.

Among his many Aunts, Uncles and Cousins who loved him unconditionally, his Aunt Joan stood out as a tremendous support to Garry during his challenging times in Toronto.

The family are eternally grateful to all the wonderful people who Garry met throughout his lifetime who helped him along the way.

Garry was very fond of Nanaimo Hospital Foundation Light the Trees fundraiser. Please consider a donation to this cause in lieu of flowers.

Garry will be laid to rest with his parents Ken & Jessie Harkness.

Due to COVID 19 a celebration of life will take place at a future time.

