

Christian, Lou-Etta Marie

March 1, 1931 – March 9, 2012

Celebration of Life – Major Family Funeral Home Wednesday, March 14, 2012

Dianne Rush, Celebrant 541-747-1732/541-870-3349

Song: “Neon Moon” by Brooks and Dunn

We are gathered here today to celebrate the life of Lou-Etta Marie Christian. ...Lou, a woman who wore many different hats with many different people in this world. Right now, each of you has a special thought about Lou. She touched you and, because she touched you, you are here today to honor her life. Thank you for your presence and support to each other. Even though this is one of life's most difficult moments, it is also one of life's most special moments, for we have the privilege of honoring Lou.

Cheryl and Chuck, Kathy and Marty, Derrek and Ashley, and Kyle, all of Frank's children and grandchildren, please know our thoughts and prayers are with you. Please know we are here to tell you we care. We may not have the words but our hearts are full. Even though we are here to give you comfort, we know that only time and memories can really do that. Allow yourself the luxury of spending time in memories.

And, to you friends and extended family, thank you for supporting Lou's family at this difficult journey in their lives. They appreciate your presence here today. Your presence tells them that Lou was significant in your life; she left her unique fingerprint on your heart. You will be given an opportunity later in the service to share a memory you have, if you so desire. Be thinking about a special thought you might choose to share.

Kathy would like to take this moment to thank the people at Gateway Gardens for the wonderful care all of you gave her mother. I quote: *“The family wishes to give a special thank you to the staff at Gateway Gardens for their support and exceptional care given to Lou during her time with them, including trips to the casino, and shopping, and to the corner store to buy her lottery tickets and a Pepsi. Thank you, also, for just hanging out and visiting with her.”*

I once heard, *“We don’t remember days, we remember moments.”* Today we will remember moments in Lou’s life. We will smile, and cry; we will laugh, and pause to reflect; we will learn something we did not know before, and we will be comforted by this knowledge. Together, we will celebrate the life of Lou-Etta Marie Christian.

Lou loved to dance. She enjoyed music. From the time she was a little girl, music was a part of her life. Marge told us, *“My sisters and I loved to sing with Lou while doing the dinner dishes. After we became adults and had families of our own we continued to get together, which of course would lead to us siblings gathering around the piano or guitar to sing our harmonies. This would almost always clear the room of any in-laws in our presence!”* And she liked a variety of songs and artists. Let’s listen to one of her favorites.

Song: “I’m Walking the Floor over you” by Ernest Tubbs

In 1931 in America, “The Star Spangled Banner” was officially adopted as the United States national anthem. The New Waldorf Astoria Hotel opened in New York City, and Lou-Etta Marie Christian was born March 1, 1931, in a different hotel in Arnett, Oklahoma; a hotel owned by her Aunt Marie’s in-law’s.

Lou-Etta was the first born child of Claude and Naomi (Kratz) Christian. Claude was so excited when Lou was born that before she was too many months old, he went out and bought her a ‘Shirley Temple’ doll! For those of you who don’t know about Shirley Temple, she was a child actress born in 1928 who began her acting career at age three, the same year Lou was born! This family would eventually have a total of six children; Lou, Noma, Thelma, Marge, Eugene (known as Gene) and Roy.

Claude worked for the county and also in construction and maintenance and in the oil fields so the family moved back and forth from Oklahoma and Texas. This was during the days of the depression. However, Claude Christian always had work and provided for his family. Lou used to say that they may not have been rich but they always had food and love. Marge told us that they all got a brand new pair of shoes every winter. That was all...one pair. Both Lou and Marge became ‘shoeaholics’ as adults!

Being the oldest child of six, Lou did a lot to help care for the younger children while her mother was busy running the household. And she was tagged with the name, "Bossy Big Sister". Marge remembers having Lou comb the knots out of her hair, a most unpleasant experience. And it seems that Lou and Noma would tease poor little Thelma all the time. Little Thelma was so cute and precious and got all the attention. Perhaps the older girls were a bit jealous, although Marge isn't sure why. She says, "*Lou was the prettiest of us all.*"

Naomi, Lou's mother, did not like the tornadoes of the Southwest and was more than willing to move to Oregon where the Kratz family lived in the Redmond area. Lou was 13 at the time. By the time she was 14, she worked in the Redmond Café where she could earn her own money to buy herself nice things and pay for dental work she wanted done to her teeth.

They moved on to Culver, Oregon. Her brother, Gene, remembers a time on the farm in Culver when Lou was out in the field moving irrigation hoses. Her beloved dog, "Pooch" saw a rattle snake and tried to shake it to death. But the snake bit the dog. So Lou beat the snake with her shovel and chopped his head off. Gene tells us he wants to be remembered for admiring his big sister for this and many other brave feats. He loved her very much and will miss her.

Lou stayed very close to her birth family all of her life. Genealogy was also important to her.

Her sister, Noma, remembers going with Lou and Rusty on dates when they were in high school. Noma wasn't old enough to date but she thinks she got to go along because their dad wanted Lou to have a chaperone. Marge, the younger sister, thought Rusty was so smart and so handsome! Also, Noma remembers when Lou got her driver's license and their dad would let them take the car to church on Sundays. However, sometimes they didn't go to church; they found other places to go instead!

Talking about church, Lou grew up going to church. Noma and Lou would sing there. In fact, all of the girls sang together. And both of their parents played the harmonica. At home they would all sing and dance and the girls would jitterbug, which was Lou's favorite dance.

Lou attended Culver High School and was on the cheerleading team and was the homecoming queen. Lou graduated from CHS in 1948.

The next year, in 1949, Lou married her high school sweetheart, Donald 'Rusty' Poulton in Redmond, Oregon. Soon after they were married, Rusty joined the Marines and Lou lived in Florida for two years while he was serving his country. When he was discharged they moved back to Oregon and lived in Seaside where they operated a dry cleaning business. Then they moved to Roseburg where Rusty worked in road construction. It was here they welcomed their first daughter Cheryl, who was born September 12, 1956. The job moved them to Eugene and on January 1, 1959 their second daughter, Kathy, was born.

The girls have great childhood memories with camping and fishing trips and playing table games like cards and marbles. They went on road trips in the car to visit the extended family and they spent a lot of time gardening with their mother. Lou taught the girls to sew and cook. And she was a 'cleaner'. When she would have the girls clean the house, she would hide 'loose change' in various places. That way she knew if they had cleaned in that area or not! Also, if she was gone and they were given chores, she would check the kitchen floor when she came home to see if it was wet or not. If it was, it meant they had waited until the last minute to do their work! Humm, not good.

Lou also insisted on 'good manners'. Being the oldest child, she insisted that her siblings display 'good manners and not embarrass her.' This continued on in her own family. Her girls were to always display 'good manners'!

Cheryl has fond memories of her mother taking her bowling. She especially remembers the time on her 18th birthday when she bowled a 245 and her mom was so amazed and proud of her! Another time she remembers is when her mother would take her and Chuck bowling after they were married.

Lou loved to take photographs, especially of her loved ones, family milestones, and the places they visited. These moments are rich with many memories of having to 'hold that pose' for just one more shot and for waiting – sometimes not too patiently – for her to make adjustments to her camera. One particularly memorable moment for Kathy was the time she was attending her Senior Prom and was surprised by a succession of bright flashes! To her dismay, she discovered her mother had crashed the dance with her camera!!

Kathy writes, "More appreciated now are the resulting photo journals my mother has compiled. She not only wrote her thoughts and expressions of love on the backs of her photographs, but she also wrote heartfelt notes to her children and grandchildren."

One of these 'heartfelt' notes was written in 1988 when Lou was diagnosed with a life-threatening brain aneurysm. Kathy tells us, *"As a part of preparing for the worst possible outcome, she wrote the following message and placed it among her important papers:*

*'To Cheryl, Kathy, Derrek, and Kyle,
I love you four so much. You all are the bright spots in my life...my earthly treasures, my reason for living. Be kind and loving to each other always. I love you so much.
Mama, xoxo
Nana, xoxo''*

Lou's beautifully sculpted flower gardens reflected her appreciation and love for color and nature. She was particularly fond of her rhododendrons and azaleas. Cheryl and Kathy spent many summer days accompanying their mother on trips to Decker Nursery and hauling Bark-O-Mulch® in the wheelbarrow, taking frequent breaks to run through the sprinkler with the poodles and snacking on grilled cheese sandwiches and Kool-Aid® popsicles.

Lou and Rusty loved to host parties with live bluegrass music provided by their good friend, Wes Johnson and his fellow band members. They converted their garage to a party room complete with dance floor, pool table and wet bar. During this time Lou was primarily a mother and homemaker. Lou and Rusty divorced in 1978.

In the mid 70's, Lou went to work in the stock room at JC Penney's. After she and Rusty divorced, she worked as a waitress in a café in downtown Eugene and also as a cook at one of the U of O sororities. However, her first love was gardening so eventually she started her own yard maintenance business and continued it until she was in her early 70's.

Lou had always enjoyed her girlfriends and she loved to dance. She liked spending time with them playing tennis, golfing, bowling, and playing cards. So, Lou continued to golf with her friends and joined a singles square dance club. On many occasions she packed her camper with food and dresses, filled the cab with girlfriends, and headed out to participate in square dance festivals.

Lou's sister, Marge, writes, *"I will most remember her for the love we shared for dancing. She liked the jitterbug, the polka, line dance, clogging, square dancing, and most beautifully, Polynesian dancing. In her time she danced in oceans and lakes, on the sand dunes, in parades and on cruise ships. She was a member of the Eagles, Single Trees, Misty Valley Cloggers, and Boots and Sandals. She sewed the most beautiful dresses. We were known to model our outfits at Mid-Winter Festival a time or two. I'm glad we squared danced together all those years."*

Lou's friend and favorite square dance caller, Daryl Clendenin, admired Lou's beautiful hair and how much fun she had at Circle 8 square dance camps. **He says, "She was such a fun loving person."**

It was her love of dancing that brought Lou and Frank Redding together. They met through the Single Tree's dance club in 1980 and were life partners for 25 years. They spent many happy years together square dancing and traveling. They made many trips across the United States including a 'heritage trip' to North Carolina to visit several of Frank's elderly relatives, see the family homestead, and the like. They visited the Caribbean, Mexico, China, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Peru, Brazil, and Chili, to name a few. They also traveled with her siblings and families and other friends. **Her brother Roy treasures, "All the family reunions and the fun trips we took to Jackpot, Nevada."**

Yes, Lou created and enjoyed a beautiful life.

Song: "A Beautiful Life" by Jim Reeves

Frank also liked to garden. After Derrek and Kyle were born, "Nana" and Grandpa Frank lovingly catered to their grandchildren, building a sandbox and wooden wagon as well as other projects to entertain them. The well-manicured lawn was perfect for a round or two of whiffle-golf and baseball. And when the garden and berries were ready....yum!!

Talking about the grandsons...**Derrek and Kyle, born in 1980 and 1982**, were the love of Lou's life! She did everything with them. In fact, she would call Kathy to see about coming over to visit but if the boys were asleep or gone, she'd wait until later.

'Nana' would look forward to dying Easter eggs with the boys and making cakes for their birthdays with the boys decorating them. She took lots of photos and, as we mentioned earlier, the yard was a haven to play in. Not only did the boys have the wagon and the sandbox, they also had a rabbit! They would work with Nana and Grandpa Frank doing yard work and be allowed to play with all the tools.

Lou would take the boys to family functions at the Eugene Eagles, where she and Frank were members, to see Santa and go on the egg hunts. She also taught the boys to golf, a hobby Derrick still enjoys.

Before we share more of Lou's life with you, the family has prepared a video tribute for you to enjoy.

Video

We've talked about a lot of activities and memories in Lou's life. Perhaps you have a memory you'd like to share with us at this time. You may stay where you are and a microphone will be brought to you.

Sharing

Lou's friend, Carol Hollaman, tells us:

"It was in Soldotna, Alaska, where Lou and I struck up a conversation with a very nice, clean cut young man from the South. 'Where is a good place here for us to visit?', she asked him. He told her of an interesting place we should visit before heading home, a place called "Charley's". So away we went...found it, a rather non-describable building, but music was coming from it and she thought surely we could dance there. Upon entering, someone told us the dancing was all in the back. Off we go, Lou leading the way. It turned out, we could only watch the dancers, pretty ladies who were dancing, not on the floor, but on the bar counter. Lou was ready to go, but Frank convinced her we should stay for at least one drink. That would have been fine, except the pretty lady dancer decided she should sit awhile on Frank's lap....This was not to be. That lap was for Lou only! And out the door she went. And poor Frank was in hot water for the next two days, never mind it was HER idea to go in the first place!"

Yes, Frank and Lou were a great pair and certainly enjoyed their life of dancing together. Lou was saddened greatly when Frank died in 2010.

Song: "The Dance" by Garth Brooks

Life changed greatly for Lou in these recent years. After Lou was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease many adjustments had to be made in her lifestyle. This was not easy.

Marty Hall tells us, *"I knew Lou only the last ten years of her life, the years Parkinson's disease exacted its unkindest toll on her. She was the most willful woman I have ever known, living in not-always-peaceful balance between her fearfulness and her fearlessness. With astonishing consistency and vigor, what she feared most, she fought most fearlessly. There was the easy way, but that was rarely Lou's way. She was not one to give in, even when what she resisted was far more comfortable, safe and possible. In her last years, Lou could have earned a Silver Star of sorts, which is awarded for conspicuous valor in the face of the enemy. It seems to me what I shall recall most about Lou, other than her devotion to family and Ginger (her pet poodle), is her resolve to not accept what she deemed unacceptable and to stare down even the most daunting adversity."*

What Marty shows us is that Lou was strong-minded. This is a wonderful personality trait. She truly was fun-loving, happy, caring, had a great sense of humor and liked a good joke. And no one could love animals and take better care of them than Lou. Lou loved her many dogs throughout her life. Her love and devotion to her last poodle dog, Ginger, certainly demonstrated that fact. Little apricot-colored Ginger was her pride and joy! And Ginger was very protective of Lou. When she was in the care center, Ginger tried to keep the caregivers away from Lou but, if she needed help, it was Ginger who would bark to call the help until they came. Marty doesn't have quite the same feelings of love toward Ginger. For some reason, Ginger seemed to think he was the 'bad guy' in Lou's life and would nip and bite him. His name for the dog was 'Injure' and 'Ginger Snap'!

Lest we paint a picture of Lou being perfect, we need to remind ourselves that she could also use this strong-mindedness to be stubborn. When something was set in her mind, it would happen. And she could get mad! If she was mad, it was best to give her time and space!

Her friend, Carol, tells us, *“Lou was never really happy in any of the assisted living homes she tried...as nice as they were, none of them could ever make her happy. She tried them for a while and then would be ready to move on. Except sometimes she forgot to inform anyone. In other words, she would just up and take off. And that would include hospital stays as well. Once, she was in Sacred Heart, she called me and asked, ‘Would you please bring me a bathrobe. I forgot mine...oh, and if you have some slippers, that would be great.’ I replied, ‘Sure Lou, I can bring you a bathrobe but my slippers won’t fit you.’ (I wore a size 6 and Lou more like an 8.) She didn’t seem to care, she’d still give it a try. ‘Okay, I can do that much.’ Upon arriving, I discover that her daughter Kathy was onto Mom. Worried she might again decide on her own to just take flight, Kathy had deliberately left Lou’s clothes and shoes at home! And that was exactly what Lou had in mind. Where she thought she was going to go, I have no idea. She just wanted outta there! Thank goodness, she had a fainting spell and I called the nurses in. They took over and I grabbed the sack with the robe and slippers and got outta there myself!”*

Kathy writes, *“My mother had a cruel disease. It took so much from her that she had enjoyed. Parkinson’s made it hard for her to control her movements, which meant that she had to depend on others and she hated depending on others. Parkinson’s’ took away her ability to dance, and she loved to dance. It took away her ability to cook fabulous meals and sew beautiful clothing. It took her away from her garden. This wasn’t the way it was supposed to be. Her plans for life did not include sitting in a wheelchair. She did not want to stop moving.*

But there was so much the disease could not take away from her; so much it could not touch. She resisted every step toward immobility, driving us all nuts! When she got a walker, she carried it in front of her until finally she had to use it. Later, when the walker was not enough support, she insisted on using it in lieu of her wheelchair. She never lost her sense of humor, either. She would smile at you with the cocked head and sly look she had when she had an amusing joke to tell. Her beautiful blue eyes were dancing brightly.”

Carol shares with us a positive note in her living situation. *“As mentioned before Lou was never happy or very satisfied at any of her living situations after she moved from her home and into care. She did find some peace with her friend Ken, also a resident at Gateway Gardens. He was some years younger than she, and oh, so good looking. He came knocking at her door once, and told her he wanted to take her out on a date. The staff at Gateway graciously made the arrangements and away they went to a very nice dinner, and a glass of wine, too, with a chaperone to boot! I teased her about her friendship with Ken, calling her a ‘Cougar’..she loved it! Ken was very good to her and oh, so patient. It all was so sweet, so nice...but it was not to be for long, as Ken was soon called to his Heavenly home. Lou cherished their short time together.”*

Kathy continues, *“She did not give up – even though one the last things she said to me was ‘I’m so tired’. I believe it may have been the only time I her life she said such a thing. But she did make it. She made it through a life that was whole and rich and devoted. She was a seamstress, a gardener, an artist, a dancer. Those qualities no disease could take from her, especially the qualities she taught and passed on to her daughters and grandsons. Her love of sewing and painting and excitement for Christmas time she passed on to her daughter Cheryl; her love of cooking and gardening she passed on to me. Her love of golf she passed on to her grandson Derrek; her love for adventure and dislike for sitting still, she passed on to her grandson, Kyle. We will miss you, Mama and Nana. Because of your gifts to us, you will always remain a part of us.”*

Disease is cruel. It robs us of many joys. And, on March 1, 2012, Parkinson’s Disease robbed us of continued life with Lou Christian. But nothing can every rob you of her love and her devotion or the lasting memories she has given you. A recently discovered note was written by Lou to her daughters. This truly shows us her heart.

“I, Lou-Etta Christian, want to tell my girls, Cheryl and Kathy, how much I love them. You’ve added a lot to our family. I can’t imagine what it would be like without you. I am fortunate I have lived to see my daughters grow into very attractive, intelligent and kind young women. I am so proud of you both.”

Lou’s sister, Marge, admired her bravery, her fearlessness as she moved on. She asked us to share the following scripture with you.

Psalm 23
The Holy Bible

*The Lord is my Shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul;
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Please join me as we recite the Lord's Prayer together.

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Dismissal: Funeral Director Randy

Graveside Service for Lou-Etta Marie Christian

We are gathered here at Oak Hill Cemetery to honor this loved one, Lou Christian.

And now, as we say our final good-bye to Lou-Etta and wish for her a gentle journey we must take a moment to note that we stand here on hallowed ground, for this is the place we memorialize Lou. It is here that your sister, mother, grandmother and friend will return to the earth from which we all came. It is here that future generations will come to find a connection to their roots. They will come here and feel the sense of belonging to a greater force called family. This is now the honored memorial place of Lou-Etta Marie Christian. Let us not forget that today we are standing on holy ground.

Marge told me how as a child, Lou would go to church. A favorite childhood verse is *John 3:16*. ***"For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."*** Lou is that 'whosoever' just as you and I are. In this verse, God gives us eternal hope and life. Lou loved to sing hymns in church with her sisters. I would like to quote the words of a favorite old hymn I believe Lou might have enjoyed. We know how she loved to garden. What better place to be than with the Lord in His garden.

In The Garden
By C. Austin Miles

*I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.*

*He speaks and the sound of His voice,
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing;
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing.*

*And He walks with me,
And he talks to me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

*I'd stay in the garden with Him
 Though the night around me be falling;
 But he bids me go
 Thru the voice of woe,
 His voice to me is calling.*

*And He walks with me,
 And he talks to me,
 And He tells me I am His own,
 And the joy we share as we tarry there,
 None other has ever known.*

Please bow with me in prayer.

Dear Lord,

We thank you for the life you gave to Lou, a life full of love, compassion, and care. We thank you for Cheryl and Kathy, who came to make her life complete. We thank you for her grandsons, Derek and Kyle, who have been her pride and joy.

We pray you will comfort their hearts and the hearts of her many other loved ones and friends as we say good-bye to her earthly body. We ask that you would keep many memories coming to their minds to comfort and heal them in this time of grief.

We now commit Lou-Etta Marie Christian to this earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust and we commit her soul into your keeping.

*We pray this in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ,
 Amen*