

Tribute

Shaw Theatre, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)

Saturday January 7, 2012, 3:30 pm

Reception

Clansmen Rugby Football Club

Saturday January 7, immediately following programme in the Shaw Theatre

Directions from Shaw Auditorium (NAIT) to Clansmen Rugby Football Club

1. Proceed SW on Princess Elizabeth Ave to 109 St.
2. Turn left (S) onto 109 St and proceed to 111 Ave.
3. Turn right (W) onto 111 Ave. The Clansmen RFC is about 100 m to the west on your right (11060 - 111 Ave).

The total distance is less than 1 km and can be easily walked. There will be food and drink as well as an open microphone in a quiet corner of the Rugby Club for those who wish to share reminiscences.



A Tribute

GRAHAM BIRNIE MILLER

September 19, 1964 – November 9, 2011.



NAIT Archives. 2004

Program

Master of Ceremonies: Robert (Robbie) Lynch
Opening Remarks: Glenn Feltham , President, NAIT

Speakers

George Moore Miller	Brother
Patrick & Allison Goebel	First cousins
Robin McAdam	Toronto and lifelong friend
Robert (Robbie) Lynch	Edmonton friend
Dustin Barucca	Edmonton rugby protégé
Gerry Schenk	NAIT colleague
Kyle Kulyk	NAIT student
Richard G. (Rick) Miller	Father

Graham was born in Pasadena California where his parents Richard G.(Rick) Miller and the late Beverley Miller nee Barnhouse (both Canadians who grew up in Edmonton) were graduate students. The family settled in Toronto in 1966. His parents took him to the primitive family cottage on the Georgian Bay and on many wilderness trips, as well as extended trips all over the world so that Graham developed an early familiarity with rough living, travel, other languages, and other cultures. He became fluent in French. Graham first discovered (English) rugby in high school. This became a lifelong passion.

After graduation from high school in 1983 he did various odd jobs (bar man, construction worker) ending up in a restaurant where he started as the salad bar busboy and finished as first cook. In the Fall of 1985 he moved to Bradford, UK, for a year. Here he played rugby, again did various odd jobs (barman, picture framer) and toured both England and the Continent. On returning to Toronto in the Fall of 1986 he worked as a bicycle courier for the next three years and is still famous in those circles as being the highest earning courier ever. Graham next embarked on a career as a helicopter pilot, graduating from helicopter school in 1990. He then found that, because of insurance costs, no one would hire him except on a short term emergency basis until he had logged 1000 hr of flight time. The good full time positions were all occupied by former military helicopter pilots. He spent the next 4 years crisscrossing North America on his motorcycle looking for work, getting long stints in Dayton, OH, and Redondo Beach, CA, but rather few actual flight hours. He then got a job with Canadian Helicopters who had just landed the civilian support contract for UN missions abroad. Graham spent the next year in some of Africa's worst disaster zones: Somalia (Spring '94), Mozambique (Summer & Fall '94) and Rwanda (Fall '94 to Spring '95). He had wonderful stories of his many fixes (usually of his own making while on leave!). Canadian Helicopters lost the UN contract so Graham lost his position. He was still well short of 1000 hr logged flight time.

In 1995 Graham moved to Edmonton to pursue a career as a bush pilot and also to care for his ailing grandmother. Upon arrival he looked up the local rugby club, the Clansmen. He was instantly nicknamed 'Chopper' (from his helicopter years, not his love of motorcycles as many believe) and became a club fixture. Starting in 1996, he and his friend Robbie Lynch coached rugby at St. Francis Xavier H.S., an existing boys' side and a girls' side which they began. Both sides rapidly rose to Provincial prominence. In 1997 Graham was instrumental in starting a women's side at the Clansmen, an idea some of the older members took a little while getting used to. For three consecutive years, 1998, 1999 and 2000, Graham won the Clansmen's President's award as that club member who had done the most for the club both on and off the field.

As a fall-back career Graham enrolled at NAIT in 1997 and earned a diploma in the area of information technology. While a student Graham was often asked for help by his classmates. In fact, NAIT hired Graham to tutor students who needed extra help while he was still a student himself. This led on his graduation (in Dec 1999) to further contracts for summer school teaching and night school teaching, finally ending in a full time position (Fall 2000). He won a major teaching award in 2004. Graham had finally found his true calling. He loved teaching and appeared to be good at it. In the Fall of 2004 NAIT sent Graham to China to teach at their program in Harbin. Again Graham had found an enduring love and made 10 additional trips to China, most for NAIT but some on his own. He was well received there and was learning Mandarin and Chinese characters.

Looking to increase his education, Graham took a sabbatical and went for a year to Cardiff University in Wales, earning his Masters degree in computer science in 2009. Back home he was teaching and planning a new course at NAIT when he was killed.



Graham with Sophie (niece) April 20, 2010