

# Miss Loosie, the Clown from Calgary



**Cheryl Ann Oberg** from Calgary, Alberta Canada is also known as Miss Loosie, the Clown, and is an accomplished speaker, humor therapist, entertainer, face painter, balloon artist, Canadian Red Cross Abuse Prevention Educator and story teller. She has appeared at conventions, fundraising events, hospitals, trade shows, schools festivals, women's shelters, and pops up here and there sharing her smiles, laughter and humor funshops in various corporate offices. Cheryl Ann started her clown journey in 1988 while working for Canada Safeway.

Cheryl and her husband work as *Miss Loosie and Buckles* with a clown business Just Kidding Inc. in Calgary Alberta Canada. She works at Calgary Children's Hospital and with Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta.

Miss Loosie clowns at Hospice Calgary, Rosedale Hospice & Agape Hospice. The following was a taped conversation I had with Cheryl at the AATH Conference about her hospice and humor work.

I'm on emergency call at my local hospice, when the hospice wants I get into character and I run. Just last week. I did a birthday party for a 37-year-old Mom You could see the tension in the room when I walked in and all of a sudden things changed and shifted. People were into playing. There were Mom and dad and grandma and brother-in-law and two little kids.

I always take a camera with me to take a couple of pictures. This time I gave it to the Dad and said "Blow the whole film. It is all for you."

Their little boy would not go up and visit his Mom because it was too painful for him -- to see her deteriorate. I got the son to do magic for his Mom. She sat upright at the time with this big grin on her face. We got into playing. There was no sadness, it was all about play and laughter. It was all joy.

There were not a lot of smiles when I walked in. The grandma was way in the back of the room against a wall. She wouldn't move from that spot, she stayed away from everyone. Little by little she moved into the group.

I do a big hug circle around the dying person. It gives energy and increases the flow of shared love. When I left, the mother indicated she wanted a hug. So I put my cheek right up to hers and she held me. When the person holds me like that, I always hang on for a little while. With this Mom, I whisper into her ear, "Have a great Journey." What else can you say? "See you next time?" "Hope you feel better?" She was going on a journey. Actually a week later she was in a coma.

Afterwards my sister, the hospice chaplain, called me and said "They have the pictures all around and haven't stopped talking about the party. It was a neat shift for them -- to get them talking together at the end."

I had some knowledge of her spiritual availability from my sister who is the chaplain of that hospital. The woman didn't have a belief in God. In fact, she wouldn't let my sister -- the chaplain in. She would say "I'm not into that."

The mother had put barriers up to any spiritual help, but she allowed me in. I was just a clown. But the joy and happiness that was fostered at that birthday party was definitely spiritual. When you have a room for an hour and a half in a hospice filled with joy it is something to give you goose bumps.

When I go to the hospice, I go to the nurses station and check in to see what is up with the patients. In my hospice they are all adults except for the visiting children. We make balloons and dazzle dogs made from a string of craft beads. We then trade them for smiles with the kids and the kids can then bring them up to their rooms to grandma or Mom . . . or whoever. It changes the energy and helps the children to be able to give something tangible although the real gift the children bring is themselves. But it gives them something to connect with and talk about.

There was this one man who saw me and growled, "There are no kids in here" as if I were a threat. So I stepped back and I said "I only want to show you a magic trick. Wanta see one?" "Well, Ok" he said and he let me in. It's just a way of making the initial connection. There are times I've gone in and just washed faces. We have a lot of fun. We do "high noon tea." I bring in curlers in the sun room and I curl hair. I make them all pretty. At one parlor day, this lady was sitting there when her pastor came to visit. She said "Could you come back in a little while, I already have a visitor"

I was trained in the hospice, and now I train the volunteers at the hospice in the art of humor, as part of the ten week training program. I do the laugh sessions. I've become a common sight there and sometimes I am in costume, sometimes not.

I have found from experience in the hospice, that you have to take the fact that people are dying, address it and sometimes turn it into some fun and humor. Once I was at the reception desk answering the phone. A lady called asking directions and I found myself saying while describing our street ". . . and when you turn, we are on a dead end road." I stopped when I heard myself say that and I guess she heard it too, as at the same time, we started to giggle and then laughed. It is something I've learned at hospice work. You have to face death and address it.

I've been working at the hospice as a volunteer for 6 years now. I tell my corporate clown customers to pay me well so I can do my volunteer work. It excites me that there is funding becoming available, because many clowns don't have the time to be a volunteer. It gives me hope and ignites my enthusiasm to think that there will be more clowns available and that this wonderful work is becoming more acceptable everywhere.

My journey as a clown has been exciting, rewarding and I'm having the best time of my life and wouldn't change a minute of it. I can hardly wait to see what's up for tomorrow!

*The gift of life . . . is no less beautiful when it is accompanied by illness or weakness . . . mental or physical handicaps, loneliness or old age. Indeed at these times, life gains extra splendor as it requires our special care, concern and reverence.*

*Cardinal Terence Cooke*

Cheryl (and *Miss Loosie*) can be contacted at reached at [Justkidding@missloosie.com](mailto:Justkidding@missloosie.com)



Here's Alley #191 – *Let's Clown Around* at their Clown Fun Convention. They have a special caring clown group that call themselves *The Calgary Caring Clown Association* . Each clown adopts one charity and some have more. If that charity has any events, they are their clown. It has to be a non profit group that needs laughter and humor that clown can provide. The Caring Clown is separate from our clown alley. I was the only one doing it and people are coming and asking for more and I can't just do it all. So I have been doing some clowning.