

December 2019

Dear Chase, Ava, Georgia, and Nash,

I am writing this letter to you to tell you a little about the other grandmother in your life. Her name is Christine but she was mostly known as Chris. She is the mother of your dads. Christine is no longer with us. She passed away 30+ years ago, in 1987, at the age of 38 years. Your dads were in the 4th grade (Dave, age almost 10) and 8th grade (Erik, age almost 13). Perhaps your dads have discussed her with you in the past, but I want to tell you what I know about her.

You should refer to her in whatever way you choose: for example, Grandma Chris or Grandma Christine. In this letter, I will refer to her as Chris or Grandma Chris. It is important that you remember her. It is easy to forget someone who you have never met or who died so long ago, but I am hoping that this letter will help you to connect with her and know and remember her even though you have never met. If she were here, she would be one of your biggest fans and would love you more than you know.

Your dads have a copy of a biography that I wrote about her some years ago. This letter is a shorter version of that biography and leaves out some detail. Later, I would encourage you to go back and read the full biography which is also on my web site at www.kenpinter.com. Check out the large collection of pictures in the printed biography and the pictures at the end of this letter.

This letter will first give you a look at the key times in her life. Then, it will give you some information about her as a person, as a wife, and as a mother. At the end of this letter, I will write a little about the cancer that took her life so early.

Be sure to see the pictures in this letter and also at the end.

Key Times in her Life



Your Grandmother Chris was born on October 14, 1948, and raised in the town of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Milwaukee is found on Lake Michigan and is about an hours' drive north of Chicago. It is cold up there in the winter.

Her dad Jerry (and therefore your paternal great-grandfather) was a fireman for the city, and her mom Bernice (your paternal great-grandmother) had an assortment of office jobs but mostly was a stay-at-home mom. Chris had an older brother, John. Their last name was Flagge which is pronounced Flag-ee. They were of German descent and were of the Catholic faith. Jerry, Bernice, John, his wife Mary, and Chris, are all now deceased.

I believe you could say that Chris had a distinctive Milwaukee accent. I was also a Yankee and so while living with her, I guess the accent just wasn't detectable. But later, while watching some short videos that we have of her, it becomes obvious.

I don't know much about her childhood since I wasn't there. She either never told me about it or else I have forgotten. Of course, we have quite a few pictures of her at a young age. I suspect she had a lot of friends since she certainly did later in her life. She had 4 aunts and 4 uncles and a host of cousins. She developed deep friendships with three other girls, Sharlene, Jan, and Bev, and these friendships lasted a lifetime. She had a dog, Jocko. Jocko was a salt-and-pepper-colored miniature Schnauzer. When we married and moved to Texas, Jocko stayed behind with her parents.



When Chris graduated from high school in 1966, she enrolled in Dominican College of Racine (Wisconsin). Racine is a town on Lake Michigan between Chicago and Milwaukee. This didn't last long, however. She said she became so homesick that she dropped out after a semester and went back home. It seems she was not ready to be a college coed. Interestingly, during high school, she was a member of the Future Teachers of America (FTA). Soon after that, she got a job at a tech company in Milwaukee called Allen-Bradley. Her brother worked there, and he helped her get a job in a research lab as a lab assistant. I have no idea what they were researching but I believe it was chemical in nature. She was working there when we met.



I met Chris at a fraternity party. I was a member of a fraternity on my college's campus. We had a frat house on campus. It was an old, three story, Victorian-style house, and we often had open parties and we would invite women from local colleges to attend. During one of those parties, Chris and her friends Jan and Bev came. She described herself as a "working girl" and was not a college coed. I "picked her up" at this party, we danced and

had a few beers and then started to date after that. About a year and a half after that, and just after I graduated, we got married in Milwaukee, on November 15, 1969. After our wedding trip, we packed her old Nash Rambler and headed to Houston where I had just started my new job.



We rented apartments for the next 2 or 3 years before we bought our first house. A few months after we settled into our new life, Chris went out job hunting. She came home with a job as a teller at a local bank. She worked at this bank until Erik was born. After about 2 years on the job, she was promoted to the supervisor of tellers. This was pretty important accomplishment for her considering that she had no college education. I would attribute this promotion to the ease in which she could develop friendships and meet people, and her above average intelligence.



A sign of the times: It is interesting to note that when Chris became pregnant with Erik, she was working as head teller and spent part of the day at the counter helping customers. About 5 or 6 months into the



pregnancy, when she began to "show", she was demoted and moved to a back-office position out of sight of customers. That could never happen today, but it was the norm back then, at least at that bank.



We bought a small "starter" home in suburban Houston in 1972, and 2 years later, in August of 1974, Erik was born. Chris never went back to work after that until Dave was in the first grade.

Chris had never been out of the country until we married. Our wedding trip was spent in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and St. Croix in the Virgin Islands. In addition, I had an opportunity to travel to Germany for my job prior to Erik being born, and she accompanied me on that trip. I was there for 2 weeks and she was with me for the first week meaning she had to fly back to Houston by herself. I know she was not comfortable with that. But she made it back OK.

In about September or October of 1977, while she was expecting Dave, we were transferred to Austin. We were in Austin only one year. Dave was born in December 1977 in Austin, and in late 1978 we transferred to suburban Chicago, Illinois. We bought a house in Schaumburg, IL. Schaumburg is about 35 miles west of downtown Chicago. This is where your dads grew up, started their schooling, and started their athletic careers. This also is where your Grandmother Chris died.



There were a couple of reasons why we took the transfer to Illinois. One of course was my career. The other one was that by living in suburban Chicago, we would be just a few hours' drive away from our families. Chris' mom and dad and family lived in Milwaukee. My sister Kathy and her family lived just to the south of Chicago, and my parents lived in Peoria, IL, which was about a 3-hour drive to downstate Illinois.

As I mentioned, Chris stayed at home to raise your dads after we moved to Schaumburg. When Dave started to school, Chris started to get more involved at the grade school. One thing that she enjoyed doing was being a lunchroom mom. Lunchroom moms would go to the school and supervise the students while the teachers had lunch. She did this for a number of years just because she enjoyed it and it was a way to give something back. Once Dave was further along in school, she applied for and got a food services job at the local high school. This was not a glamorous job, but it provided her with a useful activity, provided some income for her, and above all it allowed her to be at home when your dads came home from school. That was an important thing to her.



In 1986, Chris was diagnosed with breast cancer. She put up a great fight and endured a lot of radiation and chemotherapy treatments and the side-effects, but the cancer was out of control and had moved around in her body to her backbone and liver, and she died exactly one year after her diagnosis, on August 9, 1987. Your dads were 12 and 9 years old when she passed away. She was 38 years old.

Your Grandmother Chris now rests in a cemetery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, next to her parents, an uncle, and two grandparents.

Personal Stuff

Friends

Chris never was at a loss for friends. She made friends with everyone. I do not recall anyone who she disliked. I do not recall anyone who disliked her. I never heard her criticize anyone. She accepted everyone and wanted to be their friend and wanted them to be her friend. I believe this to be the case throughout her life.

After she died, there was of course a “visitation” at the funeral home. I knew she had a lot of friends, but I was really astounded by the number of people who came to the funeral home...people I knew and people who I had never met. The same goes for the church service that was held.

Sports

Grandmother Chris was a big sports fan. She would attend Milwaukee Braves baseball games with her dad. (The Braves later became the Atlanta Braves). She was also a Packer-backer. She loved the Green Bay Packers. She once had her picture taken with the Packer’s heartthrob running back, Donny Anderson. But her all-time favorite athletes were her two sons. Before she passed away, she was able to watch them play in their early days of sports that included soccer, baseball, and basketball.



Motherhood

Your Grandmother Chris was very at ease being a mother. She had gained a lot of experience babysitting for her brothers John’s children early in their lives. John was about 5 years older than her and had a total of 5 children, 4 of which were born before we married. John lived in Milwaukee also. It paid off because she was an excellent mother to your dads. They meant the world to her. And, when I would get mad at your dads (yes, that happened once in a while), she was right there to calm me down.

One of John’s children was a girl named Karen. She was the only girl. Karen died at the age of about 2 years when a car she had climbed into rolled down into a lake.....a tragedy almost beyond comprehension.

Fears

I think Chris had one significant fear in addition to the fear that an illness like cancer can create. That fear was being alone, and worse, being alone with an infant. There were a few times early in our marriage when I had to be out of town. These trips did not sit well with her. But she got

used to it later on. And, she was always waiting up for me as I dragged myself back from my business trips.

Career

Grandmother Chris did not seem to have any specific career ambitions. She tried college but that did not work out for her. Then she married me and later had a family, so a possible career became less important to her. She grew up in a time when women were more inclined to get married and have a family rather than go off to college to train for a career. That was not the case with all women, but it seems to be the case with her. And, in her family, no one else went to college except for her nieces and nephews and a younger male cousin who became a teacher. She nevertheless had two significant jobs after her college attempt as I mentioned above.... lab tech and teller, and the other school-related jobs... and that was good enough for her. She never complained and never attempted to go back to school. She was quite happy as a homemaker and mother. That is just who she was.

Personality

I spent a lot of time thinking about what to write in this section. The words that kept coming back to me were “easy going” and “loving”. Chris was an easy-going person. She liked everyone. She seldom if ever criticized anyone and she accepted everyone as a friend without judgement.

This was good news to me since I probably presented her with many opportunities to be mad at me or to criticize me. But, she didn't. She loved unconditionally. She accepted things as they were and didn't set out to change or find fault with anyone. I had somewhat of a temper back then. When I was mad, I tended to yell. She was right there to try to calm me down without getting upset herself.

She made friends easily and had a lot of them, more even than I knew about. She was easy to know. And her big beautiful smile certainly helped.

One of her close friends wrote us a letter after she died. In that letter she used the word “thoughtful” to describe Chris. And, she was. She was always thinking of the other person over herself. I seldom if ever heard her talk about or complain about herself, including her illness.

Also, I would have to say she had great taste in clothes. As I look back at pictures, I see that when she was dressed up, she looked really great. And, because of her, your dads looked great, too.

Cancer

It is important, I think, that you know a little about her fight with breast cancer. Knowing this will give you better insight into her. But this will be brief.

When Chris was an infant, she had what I now believe to be Hodgkin's Disease. I did not understand this until after she died. We never talked about it. The disease created a lump on her neck. In the 1948 to 1950 timeframe, doctors treated this with needles inserted into the lump.

The needles were radioactive. This treatment cured her of the disease. The lump went away, and she went on to lead a normal life. When Chris was 37 years old, in 1986, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. There are now studies that relate the two events together.... that is, treatment of female infants with radiation needles causes breast cancer later in life.

The doctors found a small lump and removed it. She then began a multi-week regimen of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. It was determined that the cancer was Stage 4 and had already migrated (called metastasized) to her back and was causing her considerable back pain. The various treatments began to work, and her pain subsided, and we all thought that she would beat this illness.

Twice in the 12 months that this was going on, she broke down and cried about it, showing her fear of what was happening. For all the rest of that time, she was strong. You could easily forget that she had cancer. She was upbeat and basically her old self. She attended sports events as much as she could and in general seemed as happy as she had been before the diagnosis.

However, about 8 or 9 months after the diagnosis, the cancer began to take over and her body began to slowly shut down. Later, she slipped into a coma and died peacefully about 3 weeks later during the early morning of August 9, 1987.

Some other stuff

1. Her favorite drink was the Vodka Gimlet.
2. At some point in her childhood, she played the Accordion.
3. I would call her a fair to good cook although it has been so long now that I find it difficult to recall what meals she used to make for us.
4. She put up with me for 19 years.
5. One of her favorite performers was Barry Manilow.
6. She was a very good ice-skater.
7. She had beautiful handwriting.

Hopefully, this letter has helped you get to know your Grandmother Chris a little better.

I'm sure there is more to know, but I think this letter tells everything you would want to know and remember about Grandma Chris. If you ever have any questions about her, please feel free to ask me. I will always be happy to talk about her with you.

Grandpa Ken

More Pictures

(In no order)



Jan, Bev, and Chris, 1970



Ken and Chris wedding, with three grandmothers, 1969



Chris and Erik, ca 1975



Reversed roles: Chris, Ken, Dave and Erik on Halloween ca Oct 1978



Chris, 1969



Christine, ca 1971



Ken and Chris, 1970



Kim's college graduation, ca 1987

Back row: Kathy, Julia, Harold, Kim, Dave, Erik, Chris, Ken (John could not attend)

Front row: Michael, Jason, Katie



Family picture, ca 1978

Back row: Kathy, Ken, John, Harold, Erik

Front: Kim, Julia, Chris holding Dave



Back: Mary, Brenda, Brian, John, Chris, Dave, Ken

Front: Brad, Brent, and Erik, ca 1978-79



Chris, Dave, and Erik, ca 1985



Chris, Dave, and Erik, ca 1978



Christine, November 1969



Chris and Ken, August 1970



Chris, Harold, Julia and Kim, ca 1980-85



Chris, Dave, Erik and Ken, 1982



Chris and Ken, May 1969



Erik, Bernice, Chris, and Dave ca 1980

Who's Who in some of the above pictures:

Page 1 – Chris as a child, date unknown

Page 2 – 1st - Chris with two friends

2nd - Chris with first paycheck

3rd - Chris and Jocko, 1968

4th - Ken and Chris, 1969

Page 3 – 1st - Chris and Erik on rocker

2nd - Chris, Erik, and Ken in Houston

3rd - Our first house in Houston, ca 1972-73

Page 4 – 1st - Erik, Chris, and Dave, ca 1978

2nd - Dave, Chris, Erik, and Ken, ca 1980

Page 5 - Chris with Donnie Anderson, 1968