

Short Love Story

Lloyd's health deteriorated, but so slowly that he and his wife since 1962, Terri now known as Sunshine, didn't recognize the significance. February, 2003 they became aware of the magnitude; internal bleeding, ambulance trip to ER, diagnosis – cirrhosis of the liver; doctor's prognosis – Lloyd's liver would last less than two years. The couple waited and hoped for a liver transplant, but the waiting list was long; they knew Lloyd's chances, age 64, of receiving a liver were low. Daily growing weaker, he struggled valiantly, clinging desperately to life and his walker – attending movies, comedies mostly, enjoying favorite restaurants – finding things they could do together. Life wasn't easy, but they found pleasure in simple things. They comforted each other and through the tears, found joy and laughter. They performed small musical shows, although Lloyd's resonant voice grew weak. They had an "impossible dream," of doing musical benefit shows in an 800 seat auditorium - which didn't happen.

August 16th, 2005, the awaited call came. There was a liver for Lloyd. With hope and fear, Sunshine and Lloyd kissed each other good-bye, maybe forever. But the operation was successful and Lloyd was transferred from ICU to regular care in record time. The children and grandchildren were there to celebrate. The new liver was working. But the road to recovery was filled with insurmountable pitfalls and set-backs. Sunshine dug into savings, staying in motels near the hospital; she desperately worked with the doctors and nurses to ensure the best care for Lloyd. The struggle to survive continued for four long months.

Lloyd never went home. Though the liver was working, nothing else was – he wasn't able to digest food properly. A week before he died, he sadly said, "You know, honey, if they can't solve this problem with digestion, I'm not going to make it." Sunshine understood, "I know, my love." Shortly thereafter, he became comatose; Sunshine and Lloyd's children did what had to be done, and following his wishes let him go on November 27, 2005. Sunshine had grieved for over two years, knowing she was losing a little more of Lloyd every day. She'd been strong and suddenly, she was weak and bereft, thinking, "I don't know what to do. I

don't want to go on." But first she had to keep a promise. Lloyd had extracted this promise –“there will be no funeral; instead, you will invite everyone to a party where family and friends can share stories and remember all the fun times we had.” Lloyd was cremated as previously arranged; his party was on December 18th, 2005 and what a party it was! Sunshine planned the party, creating seven huge posters of photos taking Lloyd from babyhood through his senior fun days. Several of their friends helped to make the party successful as Sunshine's funds were low.

One afternoon, while finishing the posters, she received a call from David, a golfer who'd played with Lloyd. He expressed condolences. He said that perhaps sometime they could have dinner and just talk – that he knew how painful it was to lose someone because he'd lost his wife of 53 years in March. Sunshine cut him off fairly abruptly with a cool “Thank you, Goodbye.” Then she realized she'd been rude. She called David back and apologized and said she was sorry for his loss and yes, perhaps sometime they could have dinner.

At Lloyd's party, friends and family shared merriment, laughter and tears over some of his most outrageous antics. Everyone had enjoyed this larger than life man. Sunshine felt supported and loved. But when it was over, she felt as though her life was over. Her family tried hard to help, bringing her to their homes; but she returned to the home she and Lloyd had shared. She had candlelight dinners with a local artist's rendition of her Lloyd and slept holding his picture. Getting out of bed became an ordeal.

New Year's Eve was approaching and her friends were concerned. Her golf friends insisted that Sunshine sit with them at the New Year's Party that she and Lloyd attended in previous years. Her music friends also invited her to a music party, saying we'll sing and have fun and we really need you at the piano. Sunshine agreed to go to the music party because she felt needed; then, David called and said, “I have an extra ticket for the New Year's Party; I bought it before my wife died; we could have dinner and sit with your friends. Sunshine was familiar with the event. It was a golf tournament and a dinner. She and Lloyd golfed together until he couldn't anymore and she missed the golfing days. She

asked, "Can I play golf?" Since David's wife hadn't golfed, he was surprised, but he said "Yes." Sunshine responded, "But after dinner I'm going to a music party; want to come?"

This was the beginning; the romance was swift. Sunshine and David found a shared love of golf, music and each other; they married in 2008 and an "impossible dream" of love the 2nd time around, came true. The wedding was beautiful. David with a little help from Sunshine wrote the ceremony and they had a scrumptious brunch and a delightful musical program at Caesars' Palace in Las Vegas. Everyone was so supportive, loving and happy for the couple. The words of approval and support from the family made the event stupendous. David's nephew created a lovely DVD which has been watched multiple times since.

One day, somewhat magically, David commented, "Sunshine, our Sunshine Performance Club performs for nursing homes and that's lovely, but wouldn't it be great to do a community show which benefits a charity in the Laguna Woods Village auditorium?"

That was another beginning; the first benefit show was February 16th, 2008 with an audience of 700+ and the second show was January 24th, 2009; every seat was filled. Saddleback Memorial Foundation expressed delight over the donations in both events.

The events continued, two yearly for various charities through 2015 -- and the music and love go on and on

-- to be continued --