

## O'Brien, Michael James – Class of '81



O'BRIEN, Michael James Born December 29, 1963 in Victoria, to Sheila and Denis O'Brien. Died peacefully May 24, 2015 in Winnipeg at St. Boniface Hospital with his wife at his bedside. He leaves his wife Robin Summerfield, son Will, mother Sheila O'Brien, parents-in-laws Bonnie Summerfield, Brian Buck and Grant Summerfield, brother-in-law Scott Summerfield (Deborah), sister-in-law Lori Summerfield (Mark), dearest friends Kim Westad, Adrian Brooks and Paul Curtis, and cousins, Jeff deKergommeaux (a true brother), Dawn Beck (Steve) and Kerry deKergommeaux (Donna). He also leaves his dear aunt and uncle, Heather and Deker deKergommeaux. Mike was a treasured uncle to eight nieces and nephews. His father Denis died

in 1985 and his furry companion of 15 years, Slim, passed away in March. Mike was raised in Victoria, which was never far from his heart, and Inuvik, NWT. He studied Creative Writing at the University of Victoria and graduated with a degree in the History/ Creative Writing Co-operative Education Program. During university, he worked at five weekly newspapers throughout British Columbia. He worked for nearly two years at the Medicine Hat News, before moving to Regina, Sk. In 14 years as a reporter at The Leader-Post he covered crime, education, health and city hall, and reported from Bosnia and east Africa. He was proudest of helping unionize the newsroom in the mid-90s. In 1999, Mike wrote a book, *Calling The Prairies Home*, which is exactly what he was doing by that time. Mike loved Regina. He appeared in several amateur theatre productions, tutored English as a second language and played basketball, touch football and softball. Mike joined CBC Saskatchewan as a radio producer, where he worked for three years. He believed CBC was a ribbon that tied the country together from one end to the other, and he hoped it will stay that way. It was Regina where Mike began acting in film and television. Starting with commercials, he worked his way up to movies (his specialty was "straight to DVD") and appeared regularly in *Corner Gas* as Wes, the insurance and liquor vendor. He also worked in the writing department for one season. He would later appear regularly as Lorne in *Less Than Kind* for HBO Canada. In 2005, Mike found his dream job in Winnipeg as a comedy writer for CBC Radio. His sketches and weekly columns appeared on shows across the country. In 2011 he hosted his own national radio summer show, called *Strange Animal*. It was in Winnipeg where Mike met the absolute love of his life, Robin, in 2007 (thanks always to Michelle Lang for arranging the blind date). They were married the next year, and Will followed in 2010. It all came to him late in life, but Mike finally had everything he ever wanted. And that's when cancer reared its head. By the time it was diagnosed in 2011, Mike's leg sarcoma had spread to his lungs. Through three surgeries, three long bouts of chemo and

three radiation treatments, Mike's health was surprisingly good, and his spirits were rarely brought low. He used this time to enjoy Will and Robin. The family had adventures big and small, including trips to Ireland, New York and California. For four years, good days outnumbered bad days ten to one. Thank you Bunty Anderson for your wisdom and kindness. Thank you also to Dr. Paul Daeninck. A special thank you to the staff on 6E at St. Boniface Hospital, including Dr. Ralph Wong, and Agnes Remillard. The nurses were his angels for four years, and extended his life so he could spend more time with Robin and Will. Mike's memorial will be Thursday, June 4 at 1 p.m. at Neil Bardal Funeral Centre (3030 Notre Dame Avenue) in Winnipeg. The service will be webcast live at [www.nbardal.mb.ca](http://www.nbardal.mb.ca). Mike lived his life in colour. Please honour him by wearing bright and cheery clothing to the service. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the Children's Wish Foundation, 350 St. Mary's Avenue, Concourse Level, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 3J2. If there's a heaven, it must look like Scotland, because Mike is golfing and drinking scotch. NEIL BARDAL FUNERAL CENTRE 204-949-2200[neilbardalinc.com](http://neilbardalinc.com)

Published in Victoria Times Colonist from May 30 to May 31, 2015