



Jonathan Oliphant

Jonathan Oliphant died on July 9, 2011. He took his own life after a long and, ultimately, unsuccessful struggle with depression. He leaves behind his wife of 22 years, Verena, and their three wonderful children: Tora, Aidan and Ian.

Jonathan was born in London, England, in 1960. His family immigrated to Canada when Jonathan was two and settled in North Vancouver. His father was a mariner and the Vancouver Harbour Master for many years. That nautical history likely played a role in Jonathan's decision, following high school, to attend Royal Roads Military College in Victoria. After graduation, Jonathan spent four years with the Canadian Navy as an engineer, travelled the world and earned many of the great bar stories he and others later told. While this exotic life of travel and adventure was exciting, Jonathan recognized that his spirit was not one that worked well in the hierarchical structure of the navy. He liked to question things and challenge the system too much. So, he decided to try his hand at a legal career and was admitted to UBC's law school in 1986. His inquisitive nature and outgoing personality were a perfect fit in the legal world. He did well and was rewarded for his efforts with articles at Russell & DuMoulin and clerkship at the B.C. Supreme Court. In the midst of all this, Jonathan and Verena were married in 1989. It was a glorious and happy wedding for a devoted couple.

Following his articles, Jonathan and Verena moved to Kamloops. He landed at the offices of the provincial Crown, and Verena, a speech therapist, established a private consulting practice. They found and bought a lovely home on the North Thompson River. Their three children were all born in Kamloops. Jonathan dabbled in private practice briefly with Gillespie Renkema but returned to the Crown, first in Kamloops and latterly in Vernon. Jonathan was good at handling criminal prosecutions, very good. He loved his job and cared deeply for those he worked with and the people caught up in the cases he handled. He was an enthusiastic proponent of restorative justice and the use of circle sentencing within First Nations communities. He was a founder of the Restorative Justice Society—North Okanagan.

Jonathan brought the same passion to his work as he displayed in other parts of his life. He was entranced by each of his children and introduced them to all the myriad pursuits he enjoyed. He was a runner and competed

in multiple ironmen, marathons and triathlons. He took up grass-hockey at one point, a sport he had no familiarity with, mostly to meet people. He was an avid skier, both cross-country and downhill. He dragged his family on adventurous camping, biking, hiking and ski trips. He did so with such enthusiasm that they enjoyed the trips almost as much as he did. He was a compulsive reader: everything from theology texts through children's literature to Booker Prize winners.

Jonathan and Verena's move to Vernon was somehow fitting, as that is where they first met in 1986. Jonathan had crashed a wedding at All Saints Anglican Church to which a friend of his had been invited. Verena was one of the bridesmaids and, in Jonathan's eyes, outshone everyone there. When they moved to Vernon, All Saints was the church Jonathan began to attend to explore faith and theology. He joined the church band, "The Crown and Cross", though he had only recently taken up music. All Saints is also where his funeral service was held on July 23, 2011.

Jonathan took on any challenge: guitar, singing (not so well) and even ballroom dancing. But most of all, Jonathan was a warm-hearted, generous, intelligent and engaging person. It was impossible not to like Jonathan and to enjoy being with him. He was always present and engaged. He collected friends wherever he went and whatever he did. They were attracted to him by, among other things, his wonderful sense of humour.

I was lucky enough to have had many adventures with Jonathan. In all of them, Jonathan was the glue that made the event stick. I will relate only one remembrance of Jonathan. He and I clerked together and, after some trifling prank, he set his mind to getting even. He proposed to do so by having me arrested during the annual Jail and Bail charity fundraiser. At a cost to him of about \$100, he arranged to have me "arrested", at which point I was to be marched down to the Art Gallery and installed in a mock cell from which I was to call people to raise "bail". On the day, Jonathan invited me for "coffee". We met in the foyer and were greeted by two "English bobbies" and two members of the VPD. A police cruiser waited outside. The bobbies read out some spurious charge and announced the impending arrest of a "Peter Roberts". With a big grin, Jonathan gleefully pushed me forward to be arrested. In reply, I insisted it was Jonathan who was the suspect, not me. Jonathan immediately reached for his identification. He triumphantly produced it, only to realize that his wallet contained none of his own and all of my identification.

So great was his sense of fun that Jonathan had let others in on his plan, leading to a tipoff. As a result, 15 minutes before our "coffee", I was able to surreptitiously replace all his identification with mine. As this double-cross dawned on him, he broke into a huge grin, was duly arrested and given a ride

to “jail” with lights and siren and all. My mistake was in going down to the Art Gallery to gloat. Even while incarcerated, Jonathan’s persuasiveness and sense of fun had him convince the jailers to arrest me for “loitering”. We both ended up in the slammer, laughing.

Jonathan is survived by Verena, his children Tora, Aidan and Ian, his siblings Geoffrey and Helen, and his uncle Nigel. He will be missed by many more.

Peter J. Roberts

