



REMEMBERING

Christiaan van Houten

June 1, 2018



Christiaan Godfried van Houten finally left his tortured body on June 1, 2018 in Minto House, Nakusp, after years of struggling with a degenerative neurological disease. He died as he had lived: quietly, on his own terms, with no sappy handholding.

Chris was born on June 23 1936 in Pankalan Berandan on the island of Sumatra, now Indonesia, then the Dutch East Indies. His parents were Louis van Houten and Johanna Jacoba van Houten-van der Lee. The families of both parents had ties to the colony that went back generations.

In WWII he spent three years in a prison camp during the Japanese occupation of the islands. Chris rarely talked about that time. If he did it was mostly to reminisce about tending cooking fires, growing tomatoes, and eating brown beans one by one as a special treat. The whereabouts of father was unknown. Hunger was real. Only recently have we realised how much of his life was influenced by the scars left by that traumatic experience.

In 1951 the family moved to the Netherlands for good. Chris never felt quite at home there, or anywhere else. All his life he had a deep need for freedom. He was happiest traveling. This partly explains his profession. Geology is an exotic choice in a country without rocks. His fellow geology students would jokingly call themselves "professional campers".

Chris married Ieneke van der Hout in 1965 while both were at University in Amsterdam. In 1969 the couple made the move to Canada, a country where geology is a mainstream profession. A job in Grand Forks brought them to the Kootenays. The couple fell in love with the region and decided to buy a piece of land while it was affordable. A small acreage near Nakusp was just right. There was another geology stint in Duncan, B.C., but eventually location determined work, instead of the other way around. In spite of having no training as a carpenter Chris built a sturdy log cabin, complete with electrical wiring that passed inspection.

Chris loved to drive and was a master at keeping old vehicles alive by careful management, such as double clutching and slowing down well ahead of a potential

stop in order to spare the brakes. He was always ready to transport family and friends, regardless of distance or hour.

In 1999 an epic trip was made to Waterloo, Ontario, to pick up daughter Nienke complete with partner, baby and two cats. Chris was also the go to driver who drove co-grandfather Ernie Blakemore to his many medical emergencies, often in the middle of the night.

Chris was always interested in current affairs and had a great sense of humor.

He will be missed by Ien, his wife of 53 years, daughter Nienke (Demetreus Blakemore) and son Alex, grandson Keevan Blakemore, co-grandmother Pat Blakemore, nephew Tim Peper (Marjel Janssen, Shanna and Florianna) in Bears Paw, AB and sister Liesbeth in the Netherlands.

A special thanks to the wonderful staff at Minto House who made his last year as bearable as possible.

