

Laurel Saunders ...about Bruce Saunders January 2000

- he was born on June 10, 1950 in Victoria.
- his father was a greenhouse operator and he grew up in the very rural outskirts of Victoria.
- in high school he taught himself photography and built a dark room in the basement.
- he went to UVic for one year and studied Fine Arts.
- that summer his best friend committed suicide and in the early Fall he took off alone on his bicycle for a marathon cross-country ride to Ottawa.
- after a miserable winter in Ontario he came back to Victoria and worked at variety of jobs: cook/deckhand on a Fisheries Patrol boat, crew member on several archaeology digs, photographer on an Opportunities For Youth grant recording contemporary native life in BC., carpet warehouseman and salesman, carpenter and painter's helper, wooden toy maker, and finally, gardener. He's been running his own gardening business since 1980.
- in 1974, two weeks before we got married, his sister Lynn committed suicide after an ongoing struggle with manic depression.
- we have two sons: Daniel born in 1980
Paul born in 1983
- after he started gardening he began having bouts of depression in the Winter
- these got more frequent and more severe until in Jan. 1989 he made a serious suicide attempt and was hospitalized at the Eric Martin Pavilion for 2 months
- this was devastating for our family. Daniel was 9 and Paul was 6. We didn't know what was going on and if our lives would ever be "normal" again. It was also terrifying for his parents who had already lost one child to this illness.
- in the hospital Bruce was given anti-depressants and almost immediately became hypo-manic. He went from being seriously depressed and insecure to being a self confident, fast talking stranger who had lots of ideas on how the hospital should be run. I was very glad he felt better but I found the new behaviour to be bewildering.
- he came home and was up and down for about 3 1/2 years.
- in 1992 he had an almost fatal bowel problem and ended up in the "regular hospital" for 2 months (most of it in intensive care). He slowly recovered physically over the next 4 months but had to get used to chronic numbness in his feet, greatly reduced strength in his abdomen, a huge scar down the whole front of his belly, and an ileostomy.
- he got more and more depressed and more and more worried about what he saw as his physical limitations, and in April of 1993 he again tried to kill himself and almost succeeded.
- 2 more months in EMP, more putting in time waiting to feel better, more endless hours of Ward 4a TV

- then he went down to watch the Friends of Music band practice in the under-used 100 seat EMP theatre and he had an inspiration. He wanted to show good movies in the theatre for the patients putting in time on the psychiatric wards and their friends and supporters. Movies to uplift, educate, provoke thought and discussion and just plain entertain.

- this time when he came home from the hospital he was taking some different medications that worked well for him and he had a project he was passionate about.

- over the next few months he was able to persuade the hospital to let him use the theatre and the video projector once a week. Monday was the only night that was consistently free so Monday became movie night at EMP.

- at the beginning, attendance was low. There were a few nights when Bruce, Peter Howard, a friend who helped get the project started and our sons Daniel and Paul were the only people there.

- Movie Monday grew and grew over the next 6 years. It became a very important project for our whole family. The boys and I all help with the concession and the clean-up and both Dan and Paul have been the Movie Monday computer technicians - updating the Website and helping Bruce (a novice computer user) to keep up with his voluminous correspondence.

- Bruce still runs a successful gardening business but Movie Monday is his passion - he spends many hours each week locating special movies, talking to film makers, talking to other psychiatric consumer/survivors who are interested in his experiences, making up and distributing posters and information, buying supplies and running the event.

- Movie Monday has become much more than a weekly free movie. It is a forum to discuss important social issues (discrimination against gays and lesbians, poverty and homelessness, living with disabilities, the problems of aging, body image, racism, issues affecting the deaf community, the oppression in Tibet etc) , a venue for film makers, artists and performers to show their work and a nonthreatening way for the general public to visit a psychiatric hospital and mingle with the patients.

- it's also a chance for Bruce to schedule some exciting special events such as a guest appearance by Dr. Dean Brooks who played Dr. Spivey in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.", special pre-show introductions of Atom Egoyan's movies by his father, Joseph Egoyan, and several visits by school classes who want to see specific movies that relate to their studies.

- the weekly event has grown and grown. The theatre is often full and we often have people in the lobby watching the movie on TV.

-there is a faithful hardworking group of volunteers who sell the refreshments for a very nominal fee and help clean up and put away when the show is over.

- all kinds of movies are shown - Hollywood blockbusters, experimental animated shorts, serious documentaries, golden oldies, kids stuff, comedies etc. Bruce tries to have an interesting mix each 6 week block - a little of this, a little of that, an appropriate short to go with each movie, some

mood-setting music, and often some pre-show entertainment or a post-show discussion led by an invited guest.

- many regulars come every week and want to talk to Bruce about movies, medications, mental health, and other topics. Some of the group homes bring van loads of folks.

- once every few months Bruce shows an old classic movie and one of the regular patrons who is a real fan comes and talks about the movie and answers questions from the audience.

- last January and this January Bruce ran the Reel Madness Film Festival out of the EMP theatre - 5 days of movies and short films on the subject of mental illness and recovery.

- he still struggles with his illness, still has periods where he feels depressed or a little manic but he continues to speak out about his own mental illness and works to raise public awareness of mental health issues and change people's attitudes. And in 6 1/2 years he's never missed a Movie Monday.