

# Roger Tierney

## 1946 — 1997



Reading this celebration of the life of Roger Tierney is a good way for new trainers to learn about one of the creators of ASIST. It is also a good way to get a sense of the early days of LivingWorks. Other readers may want a chance to know something more personal about LivingWorks.

This celebration was originally published as a joint issue of LivingWorks Education Inc. "Trainer Exchange" and the Suicide Prevention Training Programs (SPTP) "Training Zone." It has been edited to remove out of date information.

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SPTP is a program of:



CANADIAN MENTAL  
HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE  
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Trainer Exchange is a publication of LivingWorks Education Inc.  
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# A Life Well Lived

This obituary appeared in the *Calgary Herald* and the *Globe and Mail*.

**TIERNEY** - Dr. Roger Jento Tierney passed away at home on May 7, 1997 after a life of great courage and spirit. Through the last months Roger lived with cancer and continued to awe all those who knew him with his great strength. Roger will be loved forever and sadly missed by his wife Shirley Winlaw-Tierney; mother Mrs. Ora M. Love; daughters Lara and Lisa; parents-in-law Norma and Jim Anderson; close cousins and their families: Jim and Bernice Love, Jonathan, David, Christopher and godson Andrew; Michael Love; Peter and Carol Love, Russell, Chas, and Neil; Uncle Ernie Love and Betty; dear friends and business partners of LivingWorks and their wives: Dick and Carol Ramsay, Bryan Tanney and Tanya Brown, Bill and Lois Lang; friend and former wife Myrna Tierney; stepbrother Mark Love and family; stepsisters Lucy Love and Susan Love; numerous beloved relatives, friends, colleagues, and clients.

Roger was born on March 24, 1946 in Windsor, Ontario. He moved to Calgary with his parents in 1957 where he attended Queen Elizabeth, King George, Crescent Heights and Henry Wise Wood schools. He continued on to Mount Royal College and the University of Calgary where he earned a B.A. degree and an M.Ed. degree and became a chartered psychologist. In 1988 he went on to complete a Ph.D.

Roger had five great passions in life: family and friends, music, counselling, football and suicide prevention. In his late teens his many talents emerged. He joined Camp Chief Hector as a YMCA camp counsellor for several years. He enjoyed having a beer with his friends. He formed a band where he played guitar and was lead singer. In 1970 Roger married Myrna Somers.

In 1971, Roger became a counsellor at Mount Royal College and contributed to the psychological well-being of thousands of students and staff. He was actively involved in College activities and served on many committees including a term as President of the Mount Royal Faculty Association. He left on sick leave in June 1996.

Roger was also active for 20 years with the Calgary Football Association as a referee. He continued as an assistant time keeper at McMahon Stadium for the Canadian Football League until the summer of 1996.

Roger was a strong, intelligent, happy, and caring individual with an infectious wit and sense of humour. He was dedicated and committed to the service of others. Since 1980 he was a partner in Ramsay, Tanney, Tierney and Lang. Their work in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention includes an internationally renowned training program and a handbook for helping others under their company of LivingWorks.

In 1990 Roger married Shirley Winlaw and joyfully created the loving role of lifemate and the loving role of Dad to Lara and Lisa. His love will continue to be cherished and his roles as lifemate and Dad will remain sacred.

Roger was predeceased by his father John Jento Tierney in 1962 and by his stepfather Dr. Walter James Love in 1983.

A Memorial Service and a Celebration of Roger's life will be held at Mount Royal College, Leacock Theatre (West Side Entrance, 4825 Richard Road S.W.) on Sunday, May 11, 1997 at 2:00 P.M. with Rev. Douglas E. Cowan of Pleasant Heights United Church who will officiate and friends will participate in a service designed by Roger himself.

If friends so desire, memorial tributes may be made directly to a fund established to further Roger's work in suicide prevention at the Suicide Information and Education Centre, 201, 1615 - 10th Avenue S.W., Calgary, AB, T3C 0J7.

In living memory of Roger Tierney, a tree will be planted at Fish Creek Provincial Park by McINNIS & HOLLOWAY FUNERAL HOMES.

## Memorial Service — A Celebration of Life

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### **DR. ROGER JENTO TIERNEY**

#### **BORN**

March 24, 1946  
Windsor, Ontario

#### **PASSED AWAY**

May 7, 1997  
Calgary, Alberta

Age 51 years

#### **CREMATION**

McINNIS & HOLLOWAY'S "Crematorium"

Immediately following the Funeral Service, relatives and friends are invited to meet with the family in the "Terrace Room" at Mount Royal College.

#### **RECORDED MUSICAL SELECTIONS**

"Magnificent Outpouring"  
"500 Miles"  
"Blowing In The Wind"  
"Song For A Winter's Night"  
"Hobo's Lullaby"  
"Sailors Of Time"  
"Letters"  
"Rocks"  
"45 Years"  
"A Little Life"

#### **FUNERAL SERVICE**

Mount Royal College  
"Leacock Theatre"  
4825 Richard Road South West  
Sunday, May 11, 1997 2:00 P.M.

#### **OFFICIATING**

The Rev. Douglas E. Cowan  
Pleasant Heights United Church

#### **READINGS**

Psalm 139: 1-10      John 14: 1-6  
Tibetan Book Of The Dead

#### **TRIBUTES**

David Yule      Alan Dymont  
Bill Lang      Frank Campbell  
Dick Ramsay

**PIANIST:** Chris Fullerton

**HYMN:** "The Lord's My Shepherd"

#### **MUSICAL TRIBUTE**

Jonathan Love      Michael Love

#### **AUDIOTAPE**

Lara Tierney      Warren Williams      Jonathan Love

#### **VIDEO**

Lisa-Robin Winlaw Tierney      Warren Williams

McINNIS & HOLLOWAY FUNERAL HOMES

## Memorial Tributes

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Roger's memorial service took place in two theatres at Mount Royal College in Calgary on May 11, 1997. There were close to 400 people in attendance, with remote TV hookup used for one of the theatres. Roger designed a program that was truly a celebration of his life. The following are some of the speeches made by Roger's friends.

### David Yule

In 1963 I was shipped off from Red Deer to summer camp at Camp Chief Hector. It was there that I met this tall, gangly, skinny guy with the last brush cut on Earth. This meeting proved to be one of the significant events in my life which shaped my future profoundly.

I was drawn to Roger immediately, and although it wasn't until my second year at camp that we became good friends, in hindsight I knew then that this was one special guy.

1964 — Primarily at Roger's urging, I returned to Hector as a Counsellor in Training. It was during this period that we began to cultivate a friendship that has lasted until today, and will last forever. The five years I spent at Hector, and my association with "T-Bag" during that time taught me much about life, tolerance and friendship. Thanks Tube.

1965 — I move to Calgary and join Rogeatuniversity. Roger gets me involved in being a football fan... We spend the next seven years joyously celebrating the Stamps' successes and agonizing over their defeats. Not to mention a lot of yelling and screaming at the incompetent officiating!

Those were great years: university life; football; trips with his family to Ponderosa where I learned how to water ski; Roger strumming his 4-string guitar as we rolled down the road in my '61 beetle; shooting 8 mm film out through the windshield and singing Lightfoot's "Canadian Railroad Trilogy" as we sped through the Rockies; Roger folding himself

in and out of his Austin Mini; watching the North Country Singers get their start at the Pig's Eye; jam sessions with the Love boys; - just doesn't get any better. And Roge was always there when you needed him... helping us all through all the crises that we face as we grow up.

Into the '70's — we pile into an old Viscount and fly off to Vancouver to watch the '71 Grey Cup - our beloved Stamps' first championship win in over 20 years. Kissing the turf at Empire Stadium. Smuggling a van full of beer from Alberta out to Totem Pole resort during a BC beer strike.

1972 — A new chapter begins with a phone call from Roger

one weekend — "Doing anything this weekend?" he asks. I say, "Nope." He says, "The local amateur football officials need recruits, interested?" I say, "Why not?" The rest is history. We both spend over 25 years involved with amateur and professional football, associating with a terrific group of people, many of whom have become lifelong friends.



Roger and fellow CFL Referees

These are just a few of my memories, there are countless more. Roger is a caring, sensitive, selfless individual who gained enormous pleasure and strength from interacting with, teaching and helping others. He will always be with us, and we'll continue to receive strength from our memories.

## Alan Dyment

It is a great honour to speak about Roger, on behalf of his friends and colleagues at Mount Royal. Roger became a counsellor at the College in 1971 at the age of 25, and he celebrated the completion of the next 25 years of his life at Mount Royal just a year ago. During that time, Roger founded the College's Career Centre and Career Library, completed his Doctorate, became the first Head of Counselling, and was President of the Faculty Association. Roger was a leader, not just in his College role, but in everything he did. He was deeply committed to the role of counselling at the College, developing statements outlining his philosophy while Head of Counselling. Roger was also a stabilizing influence in the Counselling Centre, often seeing new opportunities where others might see problems. He was a role model and a mentor to his colleagues, willingly sharing his expertise, creativity and compassion, particularly with practicum students working on their Masters or Doctorates. Some of the people who were assisted by Roger in this way are with us today.

Roger worked on a halftime basis at the College since 1991, and I know that he was very pleased with the opportunity to work in his chosen field of suicide prevention, while continuing as a counsellor. Even though he was not at Mount Royal on a full-time basis, Roger continued to contribute his time and energy to helping students in many special circumstances, including grief counselling, training sessions for such student groups as Residence Life Assistants and Peer Supporters, and numerous workshops. Roger served on many College committees, and even in the past year, made significant contributions to an improved student disqualification policy, developing and commenting on drafts from home.

Those are some of the tangible markers of Roger's achievements at Mount Royal College. But what stands out in most people's minds are the qualities that made Roger such a special member of the College community.

Just two days ago in this theatre, we were celebrating the achievements of College staff and faculty. Tom Wood, the President, noting the long years of service of many employees, observed that the College formed an extended family, as well as being a learning community. Roger was a much-loved member of that family. He was a counsellor for so many people who were experiencing difficulty in their lives, whether they were students or colleagues. It always felt "OK" to talk to Roger; in the past few days I heard him described as a "go-to guy." He has touched the lives of countless students at Mount Royal College.

As a librarian, I naturally turn to books in times like this. After talking with many of Roger's colleagues, I think that John Buchan's words are appropriate for today:

By what do we remember our friends? Often by a gesture, a trick of expression, some quaint phrase, or a favourite pose, or some nicety of manner. These were but trivial things in our friendship, perhaps, but they spring first to the mind in the act of recollection.

My first recollection of Roger was in 1973 when I joined the College. He appeared to me to look as if he should have been a member of the Kingston Trio (for those of you who remember the music of the 50's and 60's). His office was in a huge open area which we knew as the orange desert, filled with beanbag chairs. He was one of only two people in the College to sport a brush cut (the other was the President of the time) and I just knew that there would be a guitar not far away. In fact a guitar was never too far away from Roger, and it could often be heard at College social gatherings, and particularly at Christmas Capers concerts where he entertained the students and staff. Roger used to enjoy dressing up for those events, sometimes as Master of Ceremonies, and was one of the few people who could fit comfortably into the Big Bird costume. He was a congenial man who enjoyed celebrations and parties, and I remember many Counselling social evenings with Roger holding a beer or his ever-present coffee cup in the kitchen, swapping stories — which became more elaborate with every retelling over the years.

Roger had a wonderful sense of humour, and could be counted on for a quick and witty response to a situation. Like Shirley, he had a joyful laugh that sometimes helped to make difficult circumstances endurable. Time had little meaning for Roger if he was helping someone. He was a man of great integrity and honesty, with a passion for his work and for life.

Roger was also a private person who rarely talked about himself, which made him such an excellent listener. He also displayed quiet generosity in many ways. When a counsellor who had few family members around her was dying, Roger was a constant companion in her last days, and took care of all the details following her death as if he had been a member of her immediate family. Another counsellor joined the staff in a particularly cold winter, and when his old car broke down one evening, Roger not only towed his car, but then offered his colleague his own car for the winter. Roger liked to drive old cars - not antiques, just ones that felt comfortable — and that was the great thing about Roger — you always felt comfortable in his company.

When Roger was ill, I sent him a tape of some of our favourite music, and when I saw him in the hospital later, we talked of musicians we both enjoyed, from Mose Allison to Stevie Wonder. I had introduced Roger to a more recent song that has these words as the chorus:

And these moments given  
Are a gift from time  
Just let us try  
To give these moments back  
To those we love  
To those who will survive.

Shirley, Lara, Lisa, there are so many moments of pleasure that will always be there when we think of Roger. You know that you have our support not just for today or this week, but whenever your friends and colleagues can help. You are not alone.

## On the Road Again — Bill Lang

Roger and I worked together. “Work together,” however, doesn’t begin to capture it. Our relationship might be described as a colleague’s dream and a wife’s nightmare. (In part I pay tribute to Shirley [and Lois, Tanya and Carol] for her [their] tolerance.) In all the many days that “working together since 1982” represents, there would be very few in which we did not talk together at least once, weekends included. And how many days (actually, usually nights or weekends) would we be joined by Dick and Bryan to work on something or other. (Often the same something or other, until it was “perfect” — a description that rarely lasted long in that company.) And then there is “the road.”

Roger and I must have been on “the road” doing Suicide Intervention Workshops or the Training for Trainers Course that trains others to conduct that Workshop, what, something well over 500 days out of those 15 years that I was blessed to work with him.

As you might recall (since the community that is Roger’s overlaps significantly with the community that is Fred Miles), I spoke in this same hall about the rhythm of the road that Fred and I shared bicycling. Now touch the rhythm of the road that Roger and I shared in doing the five-day Training for Trainers Course. Roger would “swing by,” as he would put it, often on a Saturday afternoon in some old clunker (Roger held on to cars like he held on to friends) filled to the brim with the materials we would need. He was usually late, by my standards, but we always made it (although there was one time the morning after his 49th birthday when a lot of creative problem-solving was required to hold that promise). The second adventure was how much the airlines would charge us for the extra dozen or so boxes that accompanied us. On the way, Roger would break into song, “On the road again . . .” Arrival somewhere, usually late Saturday, often brought a hungry search for food and a quick departure to bed to sleep as long as possible. Rest would be needed for the almost inhumanly full days ahead and to make the transition to the almost total immersion that is required to do what we were there to do. On Sunday, we would visit the training site and prepare for recreating the two-day Workshop that we wanted the new trainers to embrace. Many will never know how much effort Roger put into preparation. Not know because what he did was done so *s m o o t h l y* and second, because he would never draw attention to his effort, unless doing so would help someone else feel better. And then it would begin, and time would stand still, yet move, as if every moment was a life of its own. Other Consulting Trainers would join to help with the last three days. But the intimacy we had was not lost, it was just expanded. And then, almost before it seemed to have just started, it was time for the after the T for T dinner. As much as we were on the road, I am surprised that the restaurateurs of the world did not ban LivingWorks’ Consulting Trainers from Friday evening dinners. It wasn’t that we were bad, but we did tend to “fill up” a restaurant with the fullness of our celebration. At some point, may be many points, Roger would break into song, “On the road again . . .”

In many ways, Training for Trainers is something that can’t be explained but I say without hesitation that lives are consistently and significantly renewed there and Roger played a big part in filling Training for Trainers with life.

One contributing characteristic was his dedication to positive affirmations. I know of no one who would as consistently look for and highlight the positive in others. To witness him doing this was not simply a “sight to behold.” It was so infectious, that you couldn’t help but join the process. Roger was a wise man. So wise that he offered his wisdom in a way that others thought it their own.

Another thing you could expect in Roger’s company was time for quiet, measured, reflective talk. And, there would also be time for humour. Marvelous humour made all the more marvellous by the fact that it never demeaned, it was never made at the expense of others. Now it wasn’t always “clean” humour but Roger would know if someone might be offended and they wouldn’t hear the “unclean” ones — much is their loss, mind you. Roger had a **gift** for having fun. While in some ways that capacity for fun may have contributed to his early death, I also note that “some may live longer but few will live more fully or with as much joy.”

Roger was everybody’s father slash mother at Training for Trainers. (He was far too gentle a man to only be characterized in traditional terms.) I am sure that there is many a person here who found Roger more than willing to lend an ear to this or give a hand to that. It reminds me of the “on the road” tradition of morning coffee. I don’t know how the tradition got started, but Roger took it upon himself to make that first, “out of shower,” thank God it’s here, early morning cup of coffee for every Consulting Trainer who requested it. I can’t imagine how many hotel security staff have been (falsely) warned about a suspicious man, usually wrapped only in a towel, moving quickly down the hall, knocking on several doors and leaving “something” at the doorstep. Although this tradition can not do justice to the depth of his caring for others, it will always be a symbol of it to me.

As he was on the road, so he was in life. Faced with the loss, my heart shudders — but my mind wanders to a recent picture taken from the Hubble Telescope of a region of the universe previously thought to be relatively empty. Rather than emptiness, the picture shows thousands of points of light. But the vast majority of the lights are not stars. They are galaxies, each in turn holding a million stars. Faced with this incomprehensibility, we may be nothing or we may be everything — either conclusion equally plausible. Roger showed us how significant one life can be. Although it isn’t much help with the loss, I like to think of Roger’s spirit as, on the road, bringing life to the larger universe as his spirit will continue to do here on this smaller world we call home.

*\*I have added a few comments that length restrictions would not allow me to use at the actual memorial.*

## Dear Uncle Roger — Dick Ramsay

I never thought I would be writing you in this way. I never needed to. We have been united since we first met in May 1982. You, I, Bryan and Bill were buddies for 15 years. We were inseparable. We fully expected to work together forever. And we will! We will always be RTTL. The T-Bags T will never disappear.

The “Dear Uncle Roger” column was your domain. It was your special way of keeping many hundreds encouraged and motivated to make life better for others. So today, we come to you for advice one more time.

From Cheryl in Yorkton, Saskatchewan: I am doing a Suicide Intervention Workshop with Dave B. in Manitoba this weekend. I want to cancel it out of respect for you. What should I do?

From Dr. Norm Farberow in Los Angeles, founding father of suicide prevention in North America: Roger was a very special person in suicide prevention. I was shocked to learn of his illness. The Living-Works and SIEC story should be told for all to know.

From Colonel Jeanne Picariello, US. Army, Fort Benning, GA: I was in Germany just last month reminiscing with an old trainer about Roger and the great training you all provided. Just the other day, I was reading some old Dear Uncle Roger letters and laughed my butt off at your wonderful wit and good humour. What are we going to do without you?

From Dave Nielsen, California Department of Mental Health: Some people would believe that it is impossible to impact a piece of land as large as California... It would be hard to imagine any one person having the capability of changing our futures.

Roger Tierney was one man capable of [doing it]. From 1987 to his passing last week Roger used his tremendous warmth, humanity and friendships to move us along a pathway marked by his large footsteps.

...Suicide prevention can be an overwhelming subject, and the excuses we use to avoid dealing with it directly usually make for impenetrable boundaries. Roger, through his use of street-wise Detroit-City wit and disarming charm, had us all in his hands, letting go of fears and taking on new challenges

...Roger didn't use the stage to promote himself or his credentials, he preferred to use his skills to get us onto the stage to learn new skills and new ways of helping others. With his arms waving, his voice thundering, and those glasses sitting halfway down his nose, he made even the most difficult challenge seem doable, at times enjoyable.



*“The Boys” of LivingWorks (from L to R)  
Dick Ramsay, Bryan Tanney, Roger Tierney & Bill Lang*

Today in California there is a tremendous rush to develop mentoring programs. ...Roger, as always, was ahead of the times, practicing the ancient art of encouraging and supporting long before it became fashionable or cost-effective. This tall man from the Iron Belt (Windsor/Detroit) gently led and patiently waited for some of us slow pokes to catch up. With a smile and a hug, he moved us forward...

The people he touched here in California will miss his presence, and are thankful for the time he chose to spend with us. Roger, we love you.

From our training days in Calistoga, California, I remember our night of reading Angeles Arrien's tarot cards with Meg Paris. Through one of Angeles' latest writings I was introduced to an African Prayer which made me think of you and your life.

Let us take care of the children,  
for they have a long way to go.

Let us take care of the elders,  
for they have come a long way.

Let us take care of those in between,  
for they are doing the work.

Being there for children and young people was at the heart and soul of your love for life. Your Camp Chief Hector days are proof of this from an early age. The students at Mount Royal College who experienced the gentleness and genuineness of your counselling skills know the depth of your caring for young people. But none know it better than the Love boys: Jonathan, David, Christopher, godson Andrew, Russell, Chas and Neil. Uncle T-Bags was the greatest! Your caring and nurturing will be with them for life.

The unconditional love for your Mom was known by all who knew you well. Your heart was always big enough to care for others, young and old, no matter where they were in their own life journeys.

You in so many ways wouldn't let the child in you or the elder in you be cared for. You always saw yourself as one in between, devoted to doing the work. How scared we all were for you as you valiantly travelled to Memphis just 3 weeks ago to preside as conference program chair of the American Association of Suicidology. No one can be prouder of you for what you did than the loves of your life - Shirley, Lara and Lisa. And no one but them can stand so tall in the care that they gave to all of you in this past year - the child in you; the elder status that you so richly deserve; and the devoted LivingWorks partner that would never stop thinking about another good idea that could be of help to others.

Today is a celebration of your life. But, today is also the day for us to openly and deeply feel what one of my dearest colleagues said is "the gut-wrenching enterprise that is death." She shared William Auden's 1940 Funeral Blues with me, and I share it with all who are here today, and especially with Shirley, Lara and Lisa.

Stop all the clocks,  
cut off the telephone,  
Prevent the dog from barking  
with a juicy bone  
Silence the pianos  
And with muffled drum  
bring out the coffin,  
Let the mourners come.  
Let the airplanes circle,  
Mourning overhead,  
Scribbling on the sky  
The message,  
He is dead.  
Put crepe boas around the white necks  
of the public doves.

Let the traffic policemen wear black  
cotton gloves.  
He was my north, my south, my east, my west,  
My working week  
And my Sunday rest.  
My noon, my midnight,  
My talk, my song.  
I thought that love  
Would last forever.  
I was wrong.  
The stars are not wanted now.  
Put out every one.  
Pack up the moon  
And dismantle the sun.  
Put away the ocean.  
And sweep up the wood.  
For nothing now  
Can come to any good.

This is our time to be in the moment. Tomorrow the spirit of your lived presence will emerge in each of us. Today, in celebration, allow us also to feel the gut wrenching pain of your death.

I know Frank Campbell shared this message with you at the conference banquet in Memphis, but I wanted one more time to let you know the feelings that your buddies Dick, Bryan and Bill have had for the passion in you to see what has to be done and energy you had in you to do it.

We don't know how we let you  
So far inside our minds,  
But there you are and there you will stay.  
How proud we are of you this day  
We see clearly your passion to be where you want to be,  
And should you die tomorrow,  
Another thing we will see:  
In you lives our spirit, our soul, our flare.  
Your love will live in all who have felt your special care.  
We love you deeply,

— Uncle Dick and all the Gang

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## Frank Campbell

We are gathered to share memories, embrace our grief, to provide support to Roger's loving family who are at the epicentre of this earthquake of loss, and to give our thanks for having known Roger in the many ways we have been privileged to know him. Privilege and presence - those are the words that remind me of Roger. The privilege to know him, and his presence was so powerful. Privilege is the word that most describes my having been a friend, colleague, confidant and buddy of Roger's.

We shared an interest in music. One of my favourite memories would be jamming in the basement with Uncle Mike and Uncle Roger, as they put up with me fumbling after 25 years of picking up a bass and struggling with rock'n'roll. But to be able to play with them will be one of the highlights of my life.

We both loved antique cars. Roger could spot a taillight from a half a block away and tell you the make, model, year, and how many they made. He was incredible, he not only had cars in his hands, because he kept miniatures, he had them in his mind and heart. He loaned me his precious Olds when we were here in 1994 and we drove it. It was a wonderful experience.



We also shared a love, a passion, and that was suicidology. Otto Rank is quoted as having said that Death has a way of focusing our mind. Roger has taught me how to understand what he meant. Roger went from diagnosis to determination. He was going to fight this cancer, not surrender to it. With the help of Shirley, Lisa, and Lara, his family and doctors, those who loved him and those who knew him, he fought.

Roger had many agenda items that were part of his battle plan - I want to share with you some of the ones I was privileged to know about.

One of the first was to visit the Alamo. Perhaps in hindsight, as I think about this trip, maybe it was a symbol of Roger's battle with cancer. Because he fought, but he lost. But we went, because like that symbol, we have Roger to be our symbol.

He had always wanted to go to the Alamo, and with his health failing and the cancer reappearing, he and Shirley came south with Lara and Lisa. My wife Cheryl and I drove to Houston and spent what was their sixth wedding anniversary with them. My wife wanted to prepare an anniversary dinner for them as they celebrated their six years together as husband and wife. You know, we're Cajun people, we live to eat not eat to live. So we had to get some shrimp, and you know finding shrimp in Texas is harder than you might think. But Roger and I had spotted a shrimp truck and we found it.

And riding over there, I asked Roger if he was sure that he wanted to spend what could be the last months of his life working on the American Association of Suicidology conference in Memphis, reading papers, organizing people by phone, fax and letter to come and talk in Memphis about suicide.

The theme of the conference was "The Legacy of Suicide". I didn't realize when I picked it how appropriate it would be for both that conference and for today.

Roger said to me "Frank, this could be my last chance to add to my legacy of prevention. How can I do less?" The conference was a great success.

During the conference, one of the plenaries that was planned while Roger was in a hospital bed receiving treatment was a panel on the AAS and the Hemlock Society — they're kind of opposed people. We were sitting in the plenary and people were all getting up and talking about people's individual rights for dignity and death, and the excruciating pain. And Roger was sitting there in his wheelchair, a chair he had embraced as if it was his guitar, and never complained about, and he raised his hand and asked for the microphone. The performer that he was, was crystal clear. He said, "You know people, I think we're missing the bigger picture here. I have a diagnosis of cancer and my chances of getting through it are zip, but I'm going to be okay, because I have Shirley, Lisa and Lara, my friends, and people that love me. What we should be asking is why, when other people get this, they want to die, when I want to live?" The bigger

question — Roger could always get us there. Roger could always take us to the bigger issue, because his was service above self. It wasn't his ego he was there to promote. His job was to have an impact on reducing suicide.

Shortly it will be announced that the AAS Service Award that has been given for 30 years, will be renamed the Roger J. Tierney Award for Service. I'm proud of that, because that means that every year as long as I have breath, I'm going to reserve the right to get up and tell people about Roger, and let them know the kind of example he gave and that all of us can give. As Bill said, one person can make an incredible difference. We're going to begin an endowment fund, and the money will let us bring people that can't afford to come, to the annual conference, and Roger's going to buy the ticket.

The success of that Memphis conference has to be shared with Shirley, Lisa and Lara, who were there every moment, you couldn't turn without seeing them. Their untiring commitment to him was an inspiration to all of us of the love and generosity that comes with a single focus that everyone supports. They anticipated his every need, and they supported Roger without question.

I can't believe that tomorrow will be two weeks since he and I climbed into an overpacked rental car here in Memphis and headed to Baton Rouge, with Cheryl driving our car and Shirley, Lisa and Lara not far behind. All the way, for seven hours, Roger was clear as a bell, and he talked about today. He talked about the music, this memorial, and how easy it was going to be for me to get up here. (He was mistaken.) Because Roger said to me, "Do it the way I scripted it," because it's just like the conference, he's letting us feel and think, feel and think, and feel, "If you do it this way I'll be with you. Bill, he may go on the road again later, but he's here now. He is with us and he'll always be with us.

Roger wanted his memorial to be crafted in his hand, and we sit here today with the knowledge that he is with us. I believe that he's with us and will always be with us, as we play the music and listen to it - he wouldn't miss it for the world. Because being with family and friends is what Roger was all about. Listening and playing music was what Roger was all about. Being a husband, a father, a son, a friend, and a partner to all of us is what Roger was all about. His legacy is great and our responsibility is clear, to celebrate and have all of our feelings about Roger, because if we avoid the sad ones, we can't avoid pushing back the happy ones as well. So don't discriminate your feelings, have them. Because as Roger and I agree, we should embrace our grief, and embrace each other.

Until Roger died I was his friend. He will remain my friend until I die, and I will speak of him often, and I will speak with him often, and I encourage and invite you to do so too.



The classic Uncle Roger.  
(Notice the ever present sweater)

# Dear Uncle Roger

The first "Dear Uncle Roger" column appeared in 1987 in the SPTP "Training Zone" newsletter. When LivingWorks developed the "Trainer Exchange" they also printed Roger's column. In Alberta, in the early 1990's every "Uncle Roger Column" came with a silly (but affectionate!) caricature of Roger. Below are some of the sweetest and goofiest words and pictures from "Dear Uncle Roger".

**(1987) Dear Uncle Roger:**

Who do I have to pay off to be part of your California Training team?

Earthquake

**Dear Earthquake:**

Cheques made out to me are a very good start. You also have to be able to do a credible version of "Surfin Safari" and "Help Me Rhonda."

**(1988) Dear Uncle Roger:**

Its summer and workshops tend to slow down. How can we use this time to prepare for the upcoming year?

Bored in Banff

**Dear Bored:**

Have you got a beach towel? Do you have some reading (usually escapist junk) you've been looking forward to? How about friends and family for enjoying summer fun? In short, get out there and relax, regenerate, and indulge those laziness urges. Trainers do a tremendous job and provide a fine public service. We all deserve a rest. Uncle Roga loves you and wants you to have a safe, restful, fun summer. Take Care.



Beach Blanket Roger

**(1989) Dear Uncle Roger:**

I hear that you're not only a party animal but also the talented reincarnation of Buddy Holly. Are you available for our staff "Spring has Sprung" party?

Rowdy in Red Deer

**Dear Rowdy:**

I have been known to move and groove it on occasion. At forty-two these occasions seem to come less frequently, but they sure are fun. If you can guarantee limos, groupies and chocolate milk, we might be able to arrange a gig.



We must be tripping! The only man who went through the 60's with a brush cut, Goes HIPPIE!

**(1988) Dear Uncle Roger:**

I recently did a workshop with several professionals and I was appalled by their doubt in my credentials. We got into an argument about parasuicide and they would not believe that parasuicide is when 2 people commit suicide together. I told them that Ramsay, Tanney, Tierney and Lang has info that would support me, but I can't find it. Can you help me?

I know I'm Right Ike

**Dear Ike:**

Unfortunately you've confused a couple of concepts. Ramsay, Tanney, Tierney and Lang have information that proves that a paradox are two physicians, and a paramecium are two meciums. However, parasuicide doesn't follow the same principle. See you at the next update workshop.

**(1992) Dear Uncle Roger:**

With Christmas coming I was wondering if you had any gift suggestions for the hard working trainer?

Wondering

**Dear Wondering:**

I am delighted to suggest the Uncle Roger Anxiety Doll for those hard working trainers in the workshop. Hugging the doll provides you with gentle support when you are worked up about providing good training, and when you are really down, it licks your face. This sucker is going to replace Valium in terms of its soothing qualities. The doll is available from Uncle Roger at the low, low price of \$597.00 plus GST.



*Santa's Little Helper!*

**(1993) Uncle Roger's Christmas Message**

(If the Queen can do it so can I):

There is a lot of anger around right now. People are hurting. The economy no longer exists as we have known it. People are worried about how they are living and what may happen over the next while. Trainers are not immune to this. Many of us are affected by severe cutbacks, layoffs, and uncertainty. (Cheery little message so far, eh?). Its time that we remembered what's really important. The holiday season is a time for family and friends. Its time that we relax with and think of those folks who are our resources. The ties between us are more important than any economy or any job.

Best wishes to all for a safe, happy, restful holiday season. And all the best in 1994 as we face the challenges of today's world and do the work together that prevents and helps others prevent suicide.



*King Roger*

**(1994) Dear Uncle Roger:**

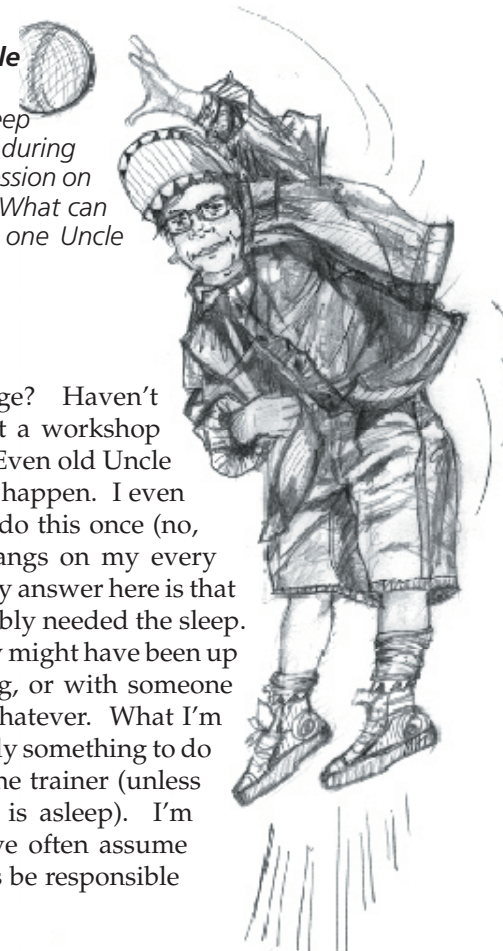
Someone fell asleep in the front row during the large group session on the second day! What can you do with this one Uncle Roger?

Strange but true

**Dear Strange:**

What's so strange? Haven't you ever been at a workshop with Bill Lang? Even old Uncle Roger has had it happen. I even had a co-trainer do this once (no, not Bill — he hangs on my every word). I guess my answer here is that the person probably needed the sleep. Who knows, they might have been up all night partying, or with someone who is sick or whatever. What I'm saying is it is likely something to do with them, not the trainer (unless the whole room is asleep). I'm intrigued how we often assume it is us. Let folks be responsible for themselves.

I was tempted to answer tongue in cheek and suggest that I bet the shotgun wakes them up, however I won't. Actually that reminds me that I would likely try to covertly move by the person or something so that they were awake when we started shotgun to avoid a terrible shock.



*Hip Hop Roger*



*Roger goes cowboy*

# Psychologist helped show others the way

**S**uicide statistics are staggering. More Albertans commit suicide every year than die in motor vehicle accidents. When Dr. Roger Tierney became aware of that problem, he decided to become part of the solution. Within a few years, this multi-talented, guitar-strumming psychologist — who adapted *On the Road Again* as his theme song — was recognized internationally for his work in suicide prevention.

## Tribute



**BRIAN BRENNAN**  
Special Contributor

His life's journey brought him initially from Whistler, Ont., where he was born in March, 1946, to Calgary, where he took his schooling from elementary through university, earning graduate degrees in education and psychology. His first dealings with troubled

## Suicide prevention work earned great acclaim

youth came when he joined Camp Chief Hector as a YMCA counsellor. Later he worked as a crisis counsellor at Mount Royal College. Roger listened to many students talking about depression and suicide. Listening in contrast to all work in crisis intervention.

Roger found his professional niche in 1980, when a provincial advisory committee recommended appropriate training for teachers, social workers, jail guards, and others on the front lines who deal frequently with potential suicides. Roger became part of the Calgary team recruited to write, develop, and market the training program.

"He was the heart and soul," says fellow team member Dick Ramsey, a University of Calgary social welfare professor. "He carried the load, so to speak."

Roger carried the *fiere de Living-Works*, the company he, Ramsey, and psychiatrist Bryan Tierney formed to help schools, correctional authorities,

mental health departments and other agencies deal with the problem of people wanting to kill themselves. An award of the Calgary program spread. Roger found himself travelling across Canada, to Australia, the United States and other countries, to show others the way.

Roger and his colleagues became recognized as the international leaders in their field. Last September, they won a major competition to develop and test a suicide prevention program in California.

In February of this year, they received an export achievement award from the Calgary Economic Development Authority, an award they particularly appreciated because it honored the impact of professional services rather than goods.

Roger was struggling with lung cancer, brain tumors and other medical problems when he and his colleagues received the CEDE award. Despite this, he persisted in fulfilling his duties as

program chairman for the annual conference of the American Association of Suicidology held in Memphis a few weeks ago.

Wheelchair bound, and very ill, Roger mustered every remaining ounce of passion and energy to take part in that conference. He returned from the conference and died May 7 at his Calgary home. He was 51.

"Right up to the last minute, he was doing what he loved the most," says Ramsey.

"To the last, he inspired us with his wisdom, his good thoughts, and his passion for what he believed in."

A memorial service was held on Sunday at Mount Royal College. Surviving family include Shirley Windsor Tierney, Roger's wife of six years, and her two daughters, Lara and Lisa.

"If he were to get an award for anything, it should be for the way he became husband and father to that family," says Dick Ramsey. "As the obituary



**ROGER TIERNEY:** Recognized internationally as a leader in his field.

Brennan continues nomination for the Tribute column. Reach him by phone, 245-8877, fax, 245-7578 or at his e-mail address: [brennanb@shaw.nevada.com](mailto:brennanb@shaw.nevada.com)

### Suicide Prevention Program

202, 10110-101 Avenue  
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 0Y2  
Telephone: (403) 838-6680 Fax: (403) 838-0860

May 9, 1997

SIEC/SPTF  
Calgary

Fax 245-0299

Dear Gerry, Deana, Karen, Lesley, Judy and Myra,

We were saddened to hear of the loss of Roger. The SPTF trainers in the Northwest Region and the staff of Suicide Prevention Program want to express our sympathy to all of you at this time.

Trainers and staff want you to know that we will continue to be inspired by Roger's work and commitment to helping others.

Roger's contribution and efforts in suicide prevention will be carried on in communities across Northern Alberta and he will be remembered with fondness.

Please pass on our condolences to his family, partners and co-workers such as yourselves.

We are pleased to see that a fund will be established in Roger's memory and will send our contributions as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Jacque Gaboury, Rob Smith, Janine Blais, Betty Hodnefeld, Connie Miller, Priscilla Lalonde, Donalda Laing, Scott Harris, Loet White, Ann-Marie McLaughlin, Cathy O'Hama, Marilyn Willier, Ken Crosby, Belinda Davis, Barb Campbell and Carol Bronsley Meeres.



**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION**  
**ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LA PRÉVENTION DU SUICIDE**  
 #201, 1615 - 10th Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T3C 0J7

June 17, 1997

To Everyone,

Recently, in Edmonton, the Board of Directors of the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP) shared some time together remembering our friend and colleague, Roger Tierney. We shared with each other, and now with you, our sorrows, our memories and our hopes.

As we went around our group that day, we heard of Roger's kindness, his good humour, his generosity, his warmth, and his vision. We spoke of Roger the friend, the teacher, the musician, and the colleague. We cried a little and laughed a lot. To remember Roger is to remember times filled with fun and laughter.

On the following morning, Ed Connors offered a sunrise prayer ceremony in which thanks was given for Roger's life and the ways that he so generously shared himself with us. It was decided that an eagle (in First Nations teachings, the bird which flies closes to the Creator) medallion, yet to be presented to Roger after the CASP conference in Toronto, would be placed in a cairn high in the Canadian Rockies by Ron Dyck.

In our need to have and to hold some special memory of Roger, we spoke of how best to commemorate his legacy to suicide prevention in Canada. In the upcoming months, CASP, in consultation with Roger's family, his friends and his colleagues, will determine an appropriate and ongoing tribute to his contribution.

We will not forget Roger, and may never finish saying good bye.

As we shared our emotions and our memories that day, we realized that we were sharing the collective thoughts and memories of hundreds of people throughout the world.

On behalf of CASP, I urge you to remember Roger in your own way, to continue your good works in his memory, and as he would wish, to take care of one another.

Thank you for this opportunity to share.

Bob Sims  
 Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention



**American Association of Suicidology**

To Understand and Prevent Suicide as a Means of Promoting Human Well-being

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 CANADA

9 May, 1997

Dear Shirley, Lara, and Lisa,

On behalf of both myself and the Board of Directors of AAS I want to express our deeply felt sympathy to you. Our hearts, our prayers, and our thoughts are with you as we deeply mourn his death.

I truly wish I were able to come to Calgary for this Sandy's service, to be part of the community of mourners who will join with you. Unfortunately, I cannot. Writing a note of condolence is so difficult; I recognize that no words can adequately convey the shared sorrow I feel in losing Roger nor reasonably speak to the pain you must be feeling.

On a personal/professional level, I have always valued my relationship with Roger. He was fun to work with and made work seem not to be. I always looked forward to opportunities to come to Canada to meet with Roger and, at least, share dinner with him more than once a year at our meetings.

As I'm sure you know, he had more than one "family," as he was a significant part of the fabric of this Association. In particular, for these many months—since Roger's cancer was diagnosed—we have been witness to his spirit, his courage, his determination, and always his humor. His efforts on behalf of AAS, in particular his unflagging intent to finish his commitment as Program Chair and to make it to Memphis, were inspirational to all of us. In the face of his prognosis, he gave to us all testimony about the human spirit and what "death with dignity" truly means. I only hope I have half his courage to follow his example when I have to similarly face the inevitable.

Please know that Roger's life and model will long be celebrated within AAS and that your family's love and support will remain with us as part of that memory.

Sincerely,  
  
 Lanny Bertram

# *We Miss You Uncle Roger...*

*The following is a collection of memories and tributes from trainers, colleagues and friends.*

## **Pat Conrad — Trainer, Spruce Grove, Alberta**

I do recall many years ago when I was a very green trainer. Roger was in Edmonton doing his survey of the workshop. My group had been very challenging the first day of the workshop. I was beginning to doubt myself and my confidence was definitely waning. Roger was a terrific cheerleader at that moment and his comments, presence, belief in me boosted my courage to go on. What he said was: "Just remember that you probably know more overall than anyone there and if not, you know where to go to find it" or something to that effect. There was acknowledgment of the considerable work it is to be a trainer and there is a group of people behind rooting for you. I have never forgotten. It comes back to me clearly in times of doubt or when things could have gone better.

Roger was truly a man of inspiration and courage and will continue to fuel my spirit.



## **Deana Franssen — Suicide Prevention Training Programs (SPTP), Calgary, Alberta**

**And what is it to work with love?**

**It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from the heart**

**It is to build a house with affection**

**It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap harvest with joy.**

—Kahlil Gibran

I was one of the lucky ones - until Roger was very ill, I got to talk with him at least once a week. I would call him to discuss a wide range of things, from lofty philosophical questions to administrivia. For me, Roge was the ultimate advisor. No detail was too small to bring to him, no concern too minor. He always considered carefully, acted fairly and with kindness. Working in suicide prevention was truly a labour of love for him. He was passionate about it and his passion was infectious, as anyone who has worked with him can testify.

I know that every time we host a Training for Trainers, I will think of Roger. I'll see him whisking into the training room (usually about one minute before the group starts!), greeting us with his usual "Good Morning People!" I'll hear him teasing Bill Lang by calling him "Billy" and I'll think of those huge cars he drove and how he could pack half the training group into the car (when he would arrive at our office for the evening social, it was like watching a clown car arrive, disembarking an endless stream of giggling passengers). I know that I will not be the only one missing Roger at our next T for T, but I believe that his voice will still be heard, his ideas will still be present. Roger did a great job instilling in us his compassion for the suicidal and his belief that we can all prevent suicide.



In 1987, I remember asking Roger if he would write a column for our newsletter because I was always passing on Trainer concerns to him and it was a great way to share his advice with everybody. Roger took to the idea like a duck to water and I think he especially liked the idea of referring to him as "Uncle Roger". The Uncle Roger title stuck because it was not only a symbol of our affection, but it was also an accurate description of Roger's role in our lives. He was like a friendly, gregarious uncle that could teach you things, make you laugh and give you great advice. That voice could carry across any room, but we also knew that if we had something important to tell him, we could quietly pour out our troubles and he would listen.

Roger took care of us right to the end. He designed an extraordinary memorial service that encapsulated the joy, courage, love and good humour that made up his life. While there were tears, there were also fond memories, funny stories, music, great pictures and even a group sing-a-long to "Brown Eyed Girl". His memorial confirmed four things for me: that he was well-loved, that he lived a good life, that his work impacted many people and that I will feel his absence for a very long time.

## Don Gordon — Trainer, Calgary, Alberta

Dear Uncle Roger,

Although I've been a conductor of the SPTP training only since 1988, my memories of you go back more than thirty years to 1964, in fact, when you and I were about to graduate from Henry Wise Wood High School. I didn't know you well, of course, since you belonged to the Sigma Alpha fraternity — the most sought-after fraternity in the school — and I was unworthy of such august company. Moreover, we each through our Grade XII year in the same class, 12C, our Chemistry class and that only because of Mr. when Mr. Miller took over the class and inflicted our to do with cat-ions and an-ions.



Roger in 1966

Anyway, Roger, my lab partner and I were working which ensued, a goodly amount of Bromine gas was unknowingly inhaled which probably led to my sulphuric acid. Well, Roger, the long and short of much of my vision, it was you who led me along from there to the nurse's room. I remember being quickly when suddenly my vision returned and I inch with each step, and that you had modified your stride to suit my temporary disability.

with Bromic acid, and, during the chemical reaction produced — much of which I unintentionally and resting my hand on wood which was soaked with it was that, after turning a pale avocado and losing the hall and down a flight of stairs to the office and unable to see at all and asking you not to move so realized that we were covering little more than an



Don Gordon  
(Mr. Bromine)  
1966

Roger, I think even then I was struck and somewhat humbled by your kindness, caring and compassion — then as now unusual qualities in one who had just turned eighteen, but not, I think, unusual for you. Twenty-four years later, you again were there — encouraging, guiding, and supporting as you led us through T for T. Again you modified your pace to suit us as we struggled to understand and move to where you had been for so long.

Well, Roger, I wish you were still here to lead, to gently support, and to enable each of us to seek and find within ourselves the answers to which you've led us. Thank you for your kindness so many years ago. Thank you for your caring throughout your life. Thank you for being my guide.



## Gerry Harrington — Director, Suicide Information & Education Centre/Suicide Prevention Training Programs, Calgary, Alberta

He would blow into our office like the welcome Chinook wind. He would bring with him his sense of humour and knowledge and when he left we felt better and wiser. He was always available when we needed him. If we had a program problem, a trainer concern, a training issue or just the need to share an idea, Roger was available to help. But he was more than that. He loved his work, and did it extremely well, but he was also willing to find time following workshops, training sessions or conferences to help others improve their skills and abilities or deal with concerns they raised. He was always willing to go to a restaurant or jazz club to enjoy and share the other parts of his life which included music, sports and family. His influence has been significant in our work and our lives for a long time and we will always be indebted to him for his contributions to suicide prevention. Roger is "On The Road Again" but he will never be far from those who knew him.



## **Karen Kiddey — Suicide Information & Education Centre (SIEC), Calgary, Alberta**

When I think of Roger...I think of his giant comfortable cardigan — the kind with the suede patches on the elbows.

I think of his easy way with people — the gift he had for making everyone he spoke with somehow feel like they'd been listened to; that they had found a new friend. He took the time to get to know me when I first started with the program, and I watched him welcome many others over the years. Roger found a way to connect with people and his way was sincere and natural, and he made it seem effortless. He believed that a network of informed and caring people could make a difference in suicide prevention, and it was Roger who warmly included all professionals and paraprofessionals alike in the broader suicide prevention network.

I remember feeling a bit scared to see Roger after his radiation therapy. He'd lost his hair, and I feared I might break down when I saw him. But one look in his eyes told me it was okay. He was still Roger. Although he had cancer, he made it clear to us that he was still very much alive and unchanged. I think we all watched in awe as he strode through the crowds, jotting down notes, handing out papers, listening, ruminating, filled with the same avid curiosity he always had.

Roger participated in life! He would carry on the best way he could. And that is what he did.

The other day on hearing of his death, a colleague referred to Roger as "the playful one". Another concerned friend called him "the philosopher." The playful philosopher? Why not?

Roger could make it so. He was capable of many extraordinary things.



## **Susan MacCulloch — Trainer, Calgary, Alberta**

I don't have a funny "Uncle Roger" story to tell, but I do remember vividly the first time I met Roger, strumming a guitar at the (then) Alberta College Counsellors Association meeting in Olds. The year was 1980 and I was a rookie counsellor at SAIT. I was warmly welcomed into my new fraternity by Roger and Shirley (who was president of the Association and responsible for "encouraging" me to follow in her footsteps the following year). I have many warm memories of the collegiality among we members of the post-secondary counselling community but at the forefront are Roger and Shirley, a team that was meant to be. They generously shared their experience, wisdom and humour with so many of us (their video version of the career planning process was pretty high tech in 1981!) They are true mentors.

I was lucky enough to apprentice with Roger in 1984 when SPTP was being launched. I marvelled at his facility to bring those awesome statistics to life - and wondered if I could ever master all of "this stuff" (I continue to wonder about this...). I often wished I could somehow insert a Roger tape into my brain during subsequent workshops. Today, when I facilitate the Attitudes Module and that big silent pause occurs, I hear Roger say "What's in the silence?", and I'm off and running.

Roger and Shirley — thank you both for the tremendous influence that you have had on my career. Your courage and commitment to life is pure inspiration.



## **Chris Manuge — Trainer, Nova Scotia**

I have decided not to submit my favorite Uncle Roger story because I couldn't bring myself to choose a single story. My association with Roger and the Calgary gang goes back for a long, long time; it began with my participation in the first two day workshop presentation for Correctional Service Canada in 1984. Bryan, Dick, Bill and Roger made their first, of many, trips to the infamous Memramcook Institute in the village of St. Joseph, New Brunswick. Until 1995 I remained active either presenting the two day workshops, doing T for T, or consulting on issues related to suicide intervention. Throughout this time I was always struck by the unflinching commitment and dedication Roger demonstrated to the work of what is now LivingWorks Education Inc. No problem loomed too large to be tackled, and we in Corrections presented some dandies. Along with the work there was time for camaraderie and sometimes even a lobster or two. And always there were hugs; I



have fond memories of saying hello and so long to Roger with a hug. I smile when I visualize my last interaction with Roger as I really needed a hug that day. In closing, I want to say it's tough to verbalize the impact Roger has had on me but I can state emphatically he's one of a kind.

### **Devon Tayler — Trainer, Edmonton, Alberta**

*"And in between the silence there was conversation and laughter, and music, and singing, and shivers up the back of your neck"*

*Van Morrison*

Roger was like that for me... silence, conversation, music, laughter, singing... and now tears as I embrace my grief and let him go.

It is not an overstatement when I say Roger Tierney changed my life. He did. And for his influence, his support, his guidance I am ever grateful. He believed in me, and I began to believe in myself... I'm not just talking training room stuff here - I mean in my life.

I had the pleasure of working with Roger at a T for T in March of this year. He gave me the tremendous gift of frank conversation about his living and his dying. We laughed, were silent and cried a few tears together. His lesson for me? Live your dying: make plans, have goals, love and laugh and cry, work, play, tell the people for whom you care how much they mean to you. Don't roll over...

Roger's compassion, encouragement and joyfulness have deeply influenced my life. I hope I can do the same. I will miss him.

Thank you, my friend.



### **Caroline Thibodeau-Oliver — California**

*Tom Oliver*

*Steve Brock*

*Sharon Lewis*

*Carolyn Fisher*

I have never met Roger but so enjoyed talking with him on the phone and his writings. My husband just recently met him at the great AAS conference in Tennessee. We share in your loss of this very special warm man. He has touched us in California. He will be missed. I appreciate how supportive and kind he has always been. Our thoughts are with you — we too are saddened by the loss and death of Roger.



### **Judy Thomson — Suicide Prevention Training Programs (SPTP), Calgary, Alberta**

Here at SPTP, we had a different relationship with Roger than he had with the trainers. Roger acted as a consultant to our program and he helped us out by serving on our Advisory Committee. He counselled me and Deana on everything and anything to do with running this program and if there was a meeting, Roger was there. So to us he was also Uncle Roger.



*Roger in Flight — Banff, Alberta 1995*

But with all the meetings and the almost daily phone calls to him, the fondest memory I have of Roger comes from the 1995 CASP conference in Banff. The social event for the conference was a Western BBQ and dance, and as most people know, every dance must feature what I think must be the potentially most embarrassing dance of all time — yes that's right — the infamous Bird dance. Not only did Uncle Roger do the Bird dance, I think he became one with the Bird! Never have I seen such enthusiasm for the Bird Dance. I guess what struck me most was the way he was enjoying himself, and how his enthusiasm spread to the rest of the group out there dancing. He also showed the same kind of enthusiasm in other aspects of his life, especially in his role with SPTP.

I will miss Uncle Roger.

### **Katherine Van Boskirk — Trainer, San Francisco, California**

Dear Dick, Bill, and Bryan,

I write these words as my plane takes off from Calgary having begun the process of letting go of my mentor, colleague, and friend Roger. His memorial service was one of the truest celebrations of the fullness of a life I have ever experienced. Shocked by his death (even though we knew it was coming), and raw with grief, I joined you to pay tribute to all that Roger was in life, and all that he will remain being in our hearts and in the lives of everyone he influenced.

Many have said more eloquently than I what Roger's life has meant to them, yet I want to add my voice to the chorus of thousands who sang his praise.

Indelible is the word that resonates through my soul as I reflect on Roger's presence in my life. Indelible has been his imprint on my being. It will be ten years in December that I met Roger on Day 1 of the workshop when he and Bill did the first two days of the San Francisco T for T. I suppose that the first thing I noticed about these two hot shot trainers was that they were toting coffee, sodas and water themselves, through several buildings and up flights of stairs just so we participants might be comfortable. Little did I know that this would be a symbol of a theme (one of nurturing, honouring and respect) that wove itself through my relationship with them throughout the rest of our years of connection.

My first memories of Roger as a trainer were that he was always keenly eager for all of us to integrate as much learning as we could. He was also acutely tuned to avoiding any sense of criticism toward anyone. He aimed only to support, bolster and encourage each one of us to reach within to the taproot of our confidence and stretch the limits of our performance to do our best. With that kind of gentle giant honouring and support surrounding me, how could I not do my best?

As I apprenticed with Roger for three days in San Diego to be a consulting trainer, (besides locking us out of the car), he shared his own fears, frustration and roadblocks to being the kind of consultant/ trainer/ person he intended to be. He let me know that in his own eyes there were times that he "fell short". I'm sure that he did that mostly to encourage me in my own battle with a self perception of falling short. And, he did it because he was honest with himself and others he cared for. It was a quality I valued immensely.

As my relationship grew with Roger from mentor, to include that of being colleagues and friends, he remained consistent in and he could be counted upon for honesty, supportiveness, nurturing, honouring and respect. I also got to know more deeply his capacity for just having great fun, and his love and devotion to his friends and family.

Being on the road for many days and long hours over a period of years with Roger has honed my appreciation and gratefulness for his seemingly endless well of energy, cheerfulness, tact, humour, affection, and ability to manage conflict, as well as his enjoyment of a good murder mystery.

My heart aches because of Roger's absence in my daily life to come, and it rejoices in his presence in my soul forever.

With remembrance and love, — Kathy



## Good times, great memories...

In 1991 SPTP held a Trainer Update meeting in Calgary for 54 of our Intervention Trainers. Part of the program was a Murder Mystery that included some familiar characters/murder suspects. One of them was a certain "Dr. Roger Czerny".

Dr. Czerny was a sweater-clad psychologist. He had several strange habits including an obsession with being called "Doctor" (this was just after Roger got his doctorate) and a strange pelvic thrust when he walked (this I have no explanation for!). I am not sure, but it is possible that during the evening Dr. Czerny might have killed off another interesting guest, a Freudian psychiatrist called "Dr. Brenda Tinney". What I do remember though is Roger laughing greatly at his doppelganger. Here are Roger's comments from his "Dear Uncle Roger" column:

### **(1991) Dear Uncle Roger:**

*I am worried about some of the trainers I met during the Update and who attended the dinner party at that nice restaurant. For instance that Dr. Roger Czerny, well I think he needs to see a chiropractor about his strange pelvic thrust and a psychologist about his obsession with authority and being called "Doctor". YOU met him, what is his problem?*

Deeply concerned and confused in Calgary

Dear Deeply Concerned:

Dr. Czerny has a case of psych envy. He has observed the reputation of someone of a similar name and is trying to emulate his idol. His pelvic thrust is the result of back problems which occurred as a result of a training accident when he fell off a bridge (actually a chair, but he likes to let on that it was a bridge).

— Deana Franssen



Roger at the "Murder Mystery" Dinner with another character "Barbara Nailer"

## Roger and Friends Win Export Award

Before he passed away on May 7, 1997, Roger and his colleagues from LivingWorks Education Inc. won a 1997 International Business and Export Achievement Award. The award, given annually to companies which demonstrate outstanding achievement in the export market, was presented by Calgary Mayor Al Duerr to three of LivingWorks' four principals - Dick, Roger and Bill. The fourth, Bryan, was unable to attend the ceremony.

In presenting the award, Mayor Duerr read the formal citation and then added his own comments. Noting that LivingWorks is not the kind of "export" one usually thinks of, he congratulated the principals and said, "It says a lot about a community when it can acknowledge the work you do around the world."



(L to R) Dick Ramsay, Roger Tierney & Bill Lang

This award came less than five months after LivingWorks was awarded a major contract to develop a new suicide prevention program in the United States. That program, "Working Together," will focus on improving communications and coordinating resources among support agencies. Once developed, the program will be offered statewide in California which currently has a diverse number of support groups and agencies.

This is LivingWorks' second export award. It had previously received one from the Alberta Government. LivingWorks' award was one of three presented at the Awards Dinner held