

June 17th, 2023

Christine Marie Waddell
10/3/1946 - 3/25/2023

Christine Marie was born on October the 3rd 1946 in San Francisco to Mary Craig and John Waddell. Mary and John met young, around 17 or 18 years of age. John was in the Merchant Marines during World War II and started and ran a successful accounting firm later in life. From a young age Christine was observed to be very bright and Mary, being an educator, had Christine's IQ tested more than once. Although the IQ test of yesteryear is not popular today, the average was 100. Christine registered 161-163 consistently. John and Mary separated when Chris was two. She stayed with her mom but John would stay involved in her life and looked forward to the weekends when he would take her out to places like the San Francisco Zoo. John would have three more children with two wives, Marie and Fern. Eric and Kase with the former and Kevin with the latter. Christine's mother Mary remarried to Lou Giorgi and they had two sons, Greg and Brian. Christine was 9 when Greg was born and 11 when Brian was born. Christine moved out 3 months into her 17th year to escape years of domestic trauma and gaslighting. Only when Mary was at the end of her life did she acknowledge what Christine survived and Lou was never confronted. Christine had come close to dropping out of the prestigious Lowell high school. She wrote in her journal,

"I hung on and made it through with grades adequate to attend state College. A few feeble attempts at suicide only made me feel more incapable. At a therapist's astute assessment of the hopeless insanity of my family's dysfunction, I left home as soon as I graduated...The three girls I was to room with arrived with their fussing, anxious parents and I hid my excruciating embarrassment that no-one had thought or cared to accompany me and say goodbye."

At San Jose state and later, San Francisco state from '64 to '66 she took many classes including philosophy, religion, music literature and phonetics, although she left college without graduating. She had imagined majoring in special education, working with auditorily challenged and bright children when...

"The irresistible strains of music and revolution from San Francisco reached me in San Jose. The flower children, make love—not war counter culture was being birthed on the city streets, psychedelics and all, and I was stuck in stuffy classrooms?"...

“I wanted freedom. Escape from deception, materialism, blind obedience and confines of the soul. Breaking free to live clean and close to the heart, the land and community.”

By 19 years of age she was working for Bill Graham and waitressing at The Matrix in San Francisco. The band, Sopwith Camel auditioned at The Matrix in February of '66 and had their first show a month later. At this time she met Norman Mayell, the drummer of the band, who had recently arrived in San Francisco, shoeless with all his belongings in a paper bag, with the intention to embark on his musical career. Norman and Christine started a multi year, often tumultuous relationship, with their utter differences and needs, clashing throughout. In '68, to find ground, Christine began her study and involvement of Hatha Yoga, a branch of yoga which uses physical techniques to try to preserve and channel the vital force energy. She sewed and quilted as a hobby and designed some of her own clothes, including her wedding dress and a quilt that would become the cover art for Oh! Pleasant Hope, by Blue Cheer, Norman's other band at the time. Chris and Norm married on April 3rd, 1971 in the backyard of Mary's house in Walnut Creek. John's side of the family attended and some were a bit shocked at the hippies' antics, including some swimming in birthday suits. Just weeks before Christine's 25th birthday on September 14th, she gave birth to me at home in Larkspur on the hottest day recorded in Marin County. They lived there on Madrone Avenue at the foothill of Mount Tamalpais with a litter of cats, raccoon visits and families with children that would become my playmates, often naked, playing in the backyard. Christine danced at the San Francisco Dance Theatre and Marin Ballet Theatre and Norman continued to tour and record music, but road trips and late night recording sessions caused more issues that would eventually lead to their separation.

Christine would meet Roger in 1974 who introduced her to EST and Werner Erhard, the writer and lecturer leading group classes on self -improvement. She took five intensive trainings with EST, from '74 to '81, including assisting and observing the seminar leader. When no one would provide childcare, she took me to these day long seminars full of emotional outpourings and personal epiphanies. During this time, Christine started teaching Yoga in San Francisco and would continue into 1979.

Werner Erhard had struck up a friendship with Baba Muktananda, a Hindu Swami and disciple of his predecessor, Nityananda, and it is thought that Erhard suggested to Baba that the west was primed for the ways and teachings of eastern religions and therefore, of Siddha Yoga. As it happened, In 1975 the first U.S. Siddha Yoga ashram opened in Emeryville CA with empty rooms to fill with prospective devotees.

At the end of 1975 after a rough break up with Roger, Chris decided to join the ashram community for sanctuary and moved us into one of its dormlike rooms. In January of '76 Baba returned to the states to visit his new ashram and his charisma and self assured statements were potent and full of promise. Chris felt the call to India and wanted to "study at the source" with hopes to attain enlightenment through rigorous meditation, sava and discipline. Her newly made friend Susanne Pregerson wanted to go and also had a five year old son named Jonah. Christine and Susanne agreed to join forces, take their young boys and room together in India. There, in the Ganeshpuri ashram, they woke before sunrise, chanted, meditated and spent many hours a day at the ashram fulfilling their duties with acts of service. Jonah and I often woke early with our mothers, drinking chai before the sun rose and the morning chants started. Christine aligned herself with the disciplines espoused by Baba and the ashram hierarchy. She held herself to extremely high standards for a beginner. After an intensive and eye opening experience of nearly 5 months, my mother and I returned to California, with culture shock and enlightenment unachieved but Christine did not give up and rented a house on Marshall Street, a half a block away from the Emeryville ashram and continued her practices. Susanne would eventually move in just a few doors down from us and a lifetime friendship between Jonah and I was to be.

Not long after returning from India, Christine met Philip Waterhouse at the ashram. He was a painting contractor and a very intentional devotee with a similar desire to achieve higher levels of consciousness through meditation, and spiritual practice. They were smitten with each other and a romantic relationship budded. They would become Vameshwari and Purandura, their given spiritual names, and with some pressure from the community, they would marry on August 14th, 1977, in a multi group ceremony of five couples, witnessed by a packed house in the main hall of the ashram.

Her daughter Tayah Victoria was born at home on Marshall Street, on July 9th 1978, contractions kick started by the midwife's advise to eat an It's-It, a San Franciscan ice cream cookie sandwich. Christine, now 31 years old, delivered Tayah in the front room with Puri, the midwife, myself at not quite 7, watching and awestruck, and with my father, Norman, and his partner, Judy waiting in the next room. Norman would become Tayah's Godfather. Tayah was given the spiritual name Bhavani and was welcomed into an established community. For about three years, we were a tight family of four, with house cats and a backyard garden. Their marriage, however would dissolve in '81 and Christine's relationship with Siddha Yoga would come to an end with Baba's death in '82 on October 3rd, her 36th birthday. Many years later, Puri would hire both Jonah and

I to paint houses in the summertime and serendipitously, I would build upon the craft of painting and home repair towards a life of self employment.

When Puri was facing his death in 2003, immanent because of A.L.S., Christine came to him for many visits to chant and pray for his safe passage. The devotional practice they shared as young parents was brought to fruition as they directed their focus and intention to the dying process. As his condition was progressing to the point he could no longer speak, he chose to stop food and water. He died January 8th, 2004, two months after the love of his life, Indira died. Puri left this life as he lived it, on his own terms, very intentionally and with the support of his family.

In the spring of 1985 Chris met Dragomir Bogdanic, a passionate Chilean man, considerably younger, and a love affair ensued for four years. They cooked together and enjoyed going out dancing. Their romance was infectious but the difference in their age and visions of the future were ultimately at odds. Years later she would say he was the love of her life. Their civil marriage paved the way for him to live and work in the U.S. There were a few other men Christine saw over the years but none of which lasted nor provided the connection she hoped for. "I have been a lover all my life, capable of enduring solitude but never finding pleasure in it nor comfort, always yearning for comfort of company and security of love."

Christine began teaching aerobics, dance, exercise, and yoga in the mid-1970s. Within a few years, her searching led her to psychotherapy. She discovered the work of Wilhelm Reich, who believed that neuroses manifest physically in the body, and is bound in the body as chronic tension. Each patient's unintegrated experiences and trauma are expressed as body armoring. The job of the Reichian therapist is to go beyond the tools of talk therapy by using the power of breath, therapeutic touch, and emotional release techniques, to assist patients to liberate themselves from their armor. This approach requires the potential therapist to work rigorously on their own emotional blocks as well. She started her own therapeutic practice in 1983, which was soon in full gear. She made Wilhelm Reich's work her own, updating his post-Freudian concepts, and eventually created her own concept of the work called the Energetics of Emotion.

As her practice grew, she saw clients both at home, making an extra room her healing space, and when finances allowed, rented an office nearby for more privacy. Chris returned to school in 1988 at UC Berkeley Extension to take classes on chemical dependency. To name the extensive journey for healing and wisdom that Christine embarked on would simply boggle the mind. In no particular order but of great significance, the curated list is as follows:

She practiced aerobics, dance, exercise, and yoga; studied Reichian therapy with Al Bauman and Tom Hendrickson; Neurolinguistic Programming with Tom Condon; the Enneagram with Helen Palmer; massage with Judith McKinnon; self defense, astrology, hypnosis, EMDR, psychic development; and the wisdom of Native American, Peruvian, and African shamanism. She facilitated Malidoma Somé and his wife, Sobanfu, by creating fliers for them to find clients, and enlisting their services in order to help them establish their West African divination practices.

Using somatic-based therapy—the practice of becoming aware of our body’s ability to tell us when we’re stressed or triggered and begin to learn how to calm or discharge that stress, and the energetics of emotion, how we feel about what is going on in our lives, our relationships and our work—Christine created and led group classes on initiation and female empowerment. She helped countless clients with her uniquely self-made therapeutic practice that she began in the mid-1980s, and continued to hone her craft up until the last day of her life.

She would say about her last few years that she was feeling a new sense of clarity about her work. The COVID pandemic forced her to work without the physical intimacy her practice had previously relied on. She was gaining recognition from folks who had never met her and many of her most recent clients had never seen her in person. The structures of her education and experiential learning became the wisdom that she embodied, allowing her intuition to guide her for the benefit of her clients.

Circling back to 1979, when Christine was 33, her mother dropped a bomb of earth shattering proportions. Mary told her that her real father was an Italian immigrant that she had had a long affair with; that he had died in 1968 of a heart attack and that she should carry this secret to death. For the next 14 years this potentiality true story would cause anxiety and depression until she decided that the truth would have to be known.

John and his wife, Fern survive Christine. John turned 99 on this past Mother’s Day. For many years, annual visits to Sacramento for Thanksgiving dinners, Christmas parties and 4th of July barbecues were the bedrock of family for Christine and Tayah and I. However, Christine often felt like the black sheep of the family, the outsider, the radical, but couldn’t name exactly why. Mary’s story might explain her sense of otherness but the thought of telling John he was not her father was devastating. She was 47 when she finally told him and John was steadfast and confident that he was indeed her father and even told Christine he was sure he had returned from the war in time to conceive her.

For some time after this difficult conversation Christine would struggle with what to do and was outraged that her mother may have caused unnecessary suffering while at the same time grief stricken that if in fact John was not her father, she would be responsible for breaking his heart and maybe never receiving forgiveness. She was desperate to be loved and acknowledged by a father, any father. Through those years as she struggled to bring into light her biological father's family and history, her three brothers Eric, Case and Kevin Waddell were understanding during this difficult phase of her life. John and Fern were understandably less comfortable with the the issue.

Ultimately, a DNA test became the only way to put Mary's story to rest. But the heart breaking tale was true. Her real father was in fact Frank V. Debellis, from Bari, Italy. John was indeed heartbroken over the DNA results but in time was able to accept the truth and Christine and John were able move beyond this rupture.

Before Frank's death he had donated amazing Italian heritage collections to the California State colleges. It so happened that his largest installment had been made at San Francisco State on the sixth floor library with books, statues and a temperature controlled room full of vinyl albums. Frank was responsible for bringing classical artists such as Vivaldi to the states. Christine's visits to the library with Tayah and I revealed both untold answers, validation and also more mysteries. Were there other children, Frank's kids? Her siblings? Would they welcome or resist her if she reached out? By 1996 she had built up the courage to make contact, starting with a letter sent to Frank's eldest son, Vincent, who responded with a hand written letter. Frank's older relatives were dead and buried in San Francisco but she had discovered she had two66 brothers and a sister, still alive, with kids of their own. In 1997 she and Tayah traveled to Italy for further research and a hope to find feelings of belonging. Tayah would later join the Italian Literature and Language Department at SFSU, revamping a dormant club called the "Michelangelo Club" and becoming its president for a few years. But it was the trip to Washington State to meet her newfound older brother, Vincent, who warmly accepted her and her story. They spent many days together putting the pieces together like a broken mosaic in need of repair. Vincent taught Christine how to make wine in his restaurant's cellar. They bonded and Vincent reflected on his father's hidden life, that this affair responsible for Christine's existence was both believable and hard to adjust to. He admitted "This is painful but I wish we'd all grown up together." Vincent illuminated her father for her with tales and memories. He showed her pictures of his large family, resemblances undeniable. Vincent's Daughters looked more like me and Tayah's siblings than cousins. Vincent would entreat his siblings to accept Christine, and while some would not, Terry Ann, the one sister, met later with Christine and they made

a connection over a few visits. One night over a bottle of Vincent's favorite red wine, he told Christine how he had often wondered why there were always two members in his family with the same name. It seemed to be an unspoken tradition. But there was only one Marie, which he now knew was Christine's middle name. Was Frank involved in the choosing or was it a cosmic coincidence? Did it matter? Christine felt like her biological father was speaking to her from the other side telling her to continue to look for clues, that she was on the right path. Suffice it to say, a sense of belonging that had been missing for so long was now beginning to take root.

Christine wrote, "To move towards the deeper truth within and without returning to the joyful receptivity to Spirit that is my true Nature."

While in Washington, Christine would visit the only existing temperate rainforest, walk alone through the lush, mossy foliage and gorgeous greens of ancient trees, their roots and her's in some sort of new conversation. She never considered herself a photographer, even felt clumsy about the whole affair, but the pictures she took on that journey captured the forest's glory and in it, the sense of connection with family and ancestors that was taking place in her life.

Christine returned from Washington nearly homeless and at the suggestion of my stepmother, Judy, rented the available house across the street from Norman and Judy's house in Emeryville. She moved in at age 54 and lived there for over 21 years until she was 75. As she did at other rentals, Christine spent much of her free time in the garden creating lush beauty that calmed her and brought her much pleasure. Some evenings she would work in the garden till dark, twilight being her favorite time of day, the colors of the flowering plants popping.

Christine wrote, "To know and experience my love as sacred and healthy. To love and be loved is safe. I am embraced by the warm glow of love. I AM LOVE."

In 2002 on September 20th, Dawn and I married in Novato, California. I felt it was an opportunity to bring family members together that had never met or had not seen each other in decades. Christine's mother Mary, and her father John and his wife Fern came. Her siblings and cousins from both the Waddells and the Debellises came. It was the first and only time her biological and non biological families would be together. Both Puri and Norman, the father's of her children were there. The combination of joy for her son's wedding was mixed with the anxious anticipation of all these people sharing the same space and it was challenging to be present in this setting, the unintegrated parts of herself externalized by her disparate family members.

In 2013 on October 19th, her daughter, Tayah married Jeff in Tucson Arizona. Christine spent many days making hundreds of colorful doilies with her friends to hang as decorations at their wedding site. At the ceremony Christine was positively glowing and full of pride as she walked her daughter down the aisle. After the wedding party the doilies were collected and Christine brought them all home. Her intention was to repurpose the doilies and fashion a beautiful quilt for her granddaughter Lucy.

The last year of Christine's life was marked by the immense undertaking of picking up 75 years of roots to leave the Bay Area and move to Fort Collins, CO to live only a short drive away from Tayah, Jeff and Lucy. Tayah and Jeff paved the way for her arrival in Fort Collins by landing her apartment, moving and building furniture and stocking her fridge with familiar and comforting things. They eased her transition while being fairly confident that Christine would inevitably need care when she became too old or feeble to live alone. Chris was delighted to spend as much time with Lucy as she could, grounded by the thought that she would see Lucy grow up. Chris got to celebrate Lucy's 6th birthday while living in Fort Collins.

Malena, her 17 year old Granddaughter, busy with high school in Oregon, was not able to make the trip out, yet she feels a strong attraction to apply for college in Fort Collins. Christine's Grandson, Emrys, at nearly nineteen would make a solo journey and fly to Fort Collins to spend a week with her in her new surroundings. They talked a lot about the documentary Emrys and his best friend, Gabriel, had begun on Christine before she moved and how the completion and revelations of her family story gave her the fortitude to sort through the vast amount of things she had and let so much go. As we naturally never expect someone to die suddenly, Emrys was sure she would see the finished film. That they worked on it together, for many days, hours at a time, became the blessing. They had made drives to special locations, such as Frank DeBellis' gravesite in San Francisco and the Berkeley foothills to recreate dream sequences she had written about years before. They bonded, his craft, her personal story, passed between them, making it his. Earlier that month, my partner Nina and I also flew to Colorado to warm her new apartment and see the place she had landed so well. New furniture mixed with collected art and decorations from her long life, created a combination that looked and felt like a completed mandala. In the coziness of her small dining room, we sipped gin and tonics, shared music, played crossword puzzles, spoke in ridiculous accents and laughed our heads off. She turned 76 while we were visiting.

In February 2021, Christine's ex husband and Judy's life partner, Norman was diagnosed with cancer. He made it to 80 before succumbing to the disease. He passed on August 13th, 2022. Judy and I formed a band in Norman's honor, rehearsed his songs and played a full set at his memorial. The only trip Christine made back to California was to attend her ex husband's tribute, a reunion of sorts with family, friends and even peers from the old days of Norm's band, the Sopwith Camel, friends she hadn't seen in years. This all took place at Norm and Judy's house in Emeryville across the street from where Christine had recently left to move to her final resting place in Fort Collins.

It's important to note that around the year 2000, Christine met Amma, a Hindu Indian spiritual leader, guru and humanitarian. She is known as "the hugging saint." Amma says that "love expressed is compassion, and compassion means accepting the needs and sorrows of others as one's own." Christine would join thousands of followers who would flock over multiple days to see Amma face to face and receive a hug and her teachings. On more than a few occasions, Amma whispered in Christine's ear some message that felt like a cosmic transmission, the succinct encapsulation of an important phase she was in or an answer to a question she had been pondering over. Both at Marshal street and in her Fort Collins apartment there was an altar to Amma with pictures, frankincense to burn and bells to ring. Many prayers were said there and many moments of silent meditation were had at that altar. It was in that the place, in Fort Collins, on the floor of her bedroom where Tayah and I would speak to her as an ancestor and begin our grieving and process of acceptance.

In the end the most important thing to Chris became the happiness of her two children and three grandchildren. She would often comment about how her son and daughter's happiness brought her vicarious fulfillment. She wanted us to be fully ourselves without apology, to find meaningful work, friends and partners. That we would, was at the foremost of her prayers. That we have, was a strong stone in the foundation of her gratitude. The Joy and pride she felt for her grandchildren, was another. Christine's sense that her relationship with the Devine had finally taken a recognizable form completed the foundation and softens the suddenness of her leaving. We didn't know and nor did she, how true, how ready, she really was.