

# I CHOOSE LAUGHTER

## 'Camilla Jones'



Laughter is certainly good medicine and with all the doom and gloom on the news everyday we could all use a good laugh now and then. Camilla Jones of Sundre in Mountain View County is doing her best to get people laughing and has been doing so all her life, making a business out of it for the last 8 years. She performs her comic routines all over Alberta, and has even worked in the US.

Camilla was born in Brooks but moved around a lot as her dad worked in the oil patch. With four sisters she chuckles that they would drive her mom and her dad, Cam, crazy with all the insane stuff they would do. "I grew up just west of Bowden and as a young girl was very active in sports and farm life," said Camilla. "I went to SAIT, Olds College and then U of S studying animal science.

After graduating I worked in different jobs, one of which was inspecting swine herds." laughs Camilla.

After she got married, Camilla explains that she had 4 boys all '9 months and 20 minutes apart'. She continued working as a dairy inspector, while raising the boys, and also developed a campground near Sundre with her husband, Terry. "With all the stuff going on you certainly had to have a good sense of humour," said Camilla.

Camilla recalls that as a young girl she was always clowning around and getting into trouble. "My dad used to ask me to sing when friends came over to the house, so in a sense he trained me to perform in front of a crowd." said Camilla. "I was never afraid to voice my opinion at home or in school and I just loved to pull pranks and have some fun with my friends and teachers. There was always laughter around the house."

Camilla's first performance was a contest she entered at Yuks Yuks in 1998. "It was called 'Canada's Search For The Funniest New Comic' and you had to be interviewed to see if you would qualify to go on stage," explained Camilla. "I saw some of the contestants die on stage in the five minutes we had to perform, but I made it right to the finals. I've never really advertised myself but I had an agent call me after that and she started booking me for different events around Calgary. Most of my business is from word of mouth."

Camilla's comic material comes from her life growing up on the farm with her family. "Basically what I try to do is explain how many things I've screwed up, how inadequate I am and for people to stop worrying so much, and have more fun in life." said Camilla. "I love to get material from the older folks because they have so much wisdom and I love really tiny kids because they haven't learned how to lie yet." Camilla pulls out, what she calls is a 'flatulent bag', from her case and tells me she is doing an experiment with her boys to see how people react when she makes a flatulent noise in a supermarket. "So far about 70% of the people just turn away with no reaction, 10% will give you a dirty look and 20% will actually laugh."

chuckles Camilla. "Lots of my material comes from my boys and some of my favourite times are sitting around at breakfast making each other laugh."

Camilla has lots of different outfits that she wears on stage and will often wear things like a doctor's uniform if she has to perform at a medical convention. "I always liked to dress up at home and would collect old clothing," said Camilla. "Terry used to get mad sometimes when he'd come home and say 'Does every day have to be like Halloween'". laughs Camilla. She pulls out a pair of rotten teeth and thick lensed glasses that she puts on as she tells me about the time she got pulled over. "When the cop came up to the window I had my teeth and glasses on and I looked at him and said 'what's the problem officer' with a straight face. He informed me that I didn't use my left turn signal so I said 'really - well that's because I'm having trouble seeing that lever on the steering column'. Well he looks at me so seriously and then at the kids in the back and says 'well I want you to try harder so have a really good day' and walks away."

It's not hard to see why two of Camilla's favourite comedians are Red Skelton and Phillis Diller. She loves to take the absurd and ridiculous to make people laugh. "I want people to be able





to laugh at themselves and not take things so seriously." said Camilla. "When people ask me how old I am I say I'm 40 Canadian and 31 American."

In addition to performing at conventions and shows around Alberta, Camilla has worked at many different venues in other parts of Canada and the US. However you can still catch her performance in some areas of Mountain View County.

Since the writing of this article, Camilla suffered a stroke. Her left side was paralysed and she was hospitalized at the Foothills hospital. "Thank God my

older two sons were at home when it happened and handled the situation perfectly." said Camilla. She used all the tools in her "Gift of Laughter" presentation to heal herself. She says, "I need to be more specific when I pray!" Turns out she was praying for a week or two break, 'nothing extravagant', and maybe some new material. "My stroke covered both requests!" said Camilla. "The incredible support I received from friends, family and the community was overwhelming, especially after being such a jerk my entire life! It's evident that I'm on this earth to relate to people, (motherhood, marriage, divorce, dating, dysfunctional family life, odd jobs, huge stumbling blocks, failures, severe health issues, etc. etc.), and share my belief that a positive attitude and a keen sense of humour can conquer all!" Camilla's new presentation is called 'Different Strokes for Different Folks' and she is already sharing this performance around Alberta.

/// Story by Paul Oldford

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