

# Biography of Christine Anne Tarantino

(1948 - 2012)

"My soul is a poem in bloom."

Christine Tarantino, 64, of Wendell, Massachusetts, died on December 7, 2012 at Hospice of the Fisher Home in North Amherst, Massachusetts. She leaves her loving partner, Douglas Dawson, and their two cats, Oscar and Lucy; her brother, Peter Tarantino, of San Carlos, California; her nephew, Kyle, and her niece, Lauren; and many aunts, uncles, and cousins. One of the great joys of the past year of her life was the reconnections she was making with her family, especially her dear cousins. Christine Anne Tarantino was born in the Bronx on December 3, 1948, to Francesca Rita Russo Tarantino and Anthony Thomas Tarantino. Although her family moved to Framingham, Massachusetts, while Christine was young, she had fond memories of her life in the City: museums and shows, the Bronx Zoo, her large extended Italian-American family (especially the many artistic members), and the family bread business, Russo Brothers Bakeries. Christine's later childhood and young adult life were spent in the Framingham area and Cape Cod. She attended Fitchburg State College, where she earned teaching certificates in Art and Education, and became a second grade teacher in Westminister upon graduation. Christine emerged from a near-death experience triggered by an allergic reaction with heightened sensibilities and an artistic focus. She rejected previously established family and career relationships and goals in favor of a natural lifestyle guided by rapid spiritual awareness and supernatural zeal. For the last thirty years of her life, although she continued as an educator in various part-time and temporary positions, including museum workshops and substitute teaching in many local schools, her overriding goal was to make Art. Also known as Words of Light, CHRISTAR, and the homeless poet, Christine believed strongly in the transformative power of words, both spoken and written. She believed that the exclusive use of positive words would advance one's consciousness. Thoughtless or unkind words distressed Christine, and she tended to avoid situations where they could be found. Christine created highly-regarded, Fluxus-inspired visio-textual art, including concrete/visual poetry; collage using organic/found materials; mail art, a global artist network in which art moves through mail as its medium; and artist books, unique and small editions of original writings/images in artistic book-related structures. Her performance/event art consisted of creatively planned or spontaneous, short or long-term, moments and actions of documented artistic engagement. In 2012 alone, Christine had her works included in Fluxus or artist book shows in Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Ireland, Nepal, and the United States. She was one of the first contemporary American artists to have her work shown in Bhutan, the Kingdom of Happiness. She maintained several art-related blogs that had hundreds of visitors each day from many different countries. As a member of OPEN Fluxus, DoDo/DaDa ARTE POSTALE, and the International Union of Mail Artists, she was a shining light in an international network of artists devoted to cooperating, communicating, and collaborating. The solitude and natural beauty of her Wendell homestead nourished and inspired Christine. She was an avid gardener, an accomplished and creative cook, and a fearless defender of any animal she thought was being mistreated. She loved to walk in the Quabbin and drive through the Berkshires, especially to the art museums in North Adams and Williamstown. She took great pride in her personal appearance, occasionally remarking that she came from a long line of Italian beauties and wasn't about to let them down. In accordance with Christine's wishes, there will be no services. Contributions in her name may be made to the Franklin County Community Meals Program in Greenfield, Massachusetts; the Athol Animal Shelter or the Athol Public Library in Athol, Massachusetts; or Medicine Mammals, a wildlife rehabilitation facility, in Wendell, Massachusetts. More importantly, she would want you to write a poem, make some art, reach out to someone in distress, avoid harsh words, celebrate the divinity that is within you. Douglas Dawson extends his heartfelt thanks to the staff and volunteers of Hospice of the Fisher Home; to his friends and co-workers at the Franklin County Home Care Corporation; and to his friends and neighbors in the Wendell community. These wonderful people, with their compassion and love, lifted him up and held him steady, and allowed him to care for Christine through this most difficult time. Christine will be greatly missed by those who knew and loved her, and her Words of Light will shine on in the hearts of her fellow artists and others across the globe who have heard or read them.