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**BEARCHELL, Christine Louise**  
(August 16, 1953 – February 18, 2007)

Chris Bearchell was always proud to share a family legend, that her father's people were Roma — Gypsies. Carneys, artists, musicians, fortune-tellers, jugglers, acrobats and bear-tamers— until early last century, nearly all popular entertainment across Europe was provided by these nomadic tribes.



Chris speculated that her last name, "Bearchell," meant her ancestors were Bear-Tamers. Medvedara, Ričkara, Ursari, Mechkara or Ajjides, Roma bear-tamers were diverse in their languages and ethnic backgrounds. Travelling from village to village performing at fairs and festivals

Roma bears were trained with signals to walk upright, to lean on a shepherd's crook with their front paws, and dance to the beat of a drum.

There's an ominous saying in the circus that bear-trainers never retire. It takes great ferocity to tame a bear.



Chris travelled through life always with a merry band of clowns, freaks, oddballs, artists and performers— each with their own special talents.

Sometimes homeless or destitute, often excluded and reviled, Chris recognized also the liberty in being dispossessed. May Chris delight in ultimate freedom on her caravan travels through afterlife. ✧

