

Constance Isherwood

Constance Dora Isherwood (nee Holmes) was born on January 19, 1920 in Nanaimo, BC, and died peacefully on January 26, 2021 in Victoria, BC at home, surrounded by family. Connie was predeceased by her husband, Thomas Foster Isherwood, as well as her brothers, George and David, and is survived by her sons, Charles and George, as well as cousins, nieces and nephews.

Connie's parents, Grace and Charles Holmes, immigrated to Canada from England, eventually settling on a farm in Nanaimo. Her father later began working for the Forest Service, and Connie's family moved to the capital city as her father's job as a professional forester relocated him to Victoria in 1937. During the Second World War, given the need for entertainment for the troops in camps located on Southern Vancouver Island, Connie joined the Salvation Army Concert Party as part of a trio called "The Rhythmettes". Over the next few years, the group expanded, and Connie began playing the drums. She eventually toured as a member of an "all-girl" orchestra across Western Canada.

Initially trained as a legal secretary, Connie began working for Mr. Ernest Tait in 1939. Upon returning from the musical tour, Connie decided to pursue a legal career and attended law school at UBC. One of eight females in her class, Connie became known as "Sherlock Holmes", given her questioning and problem-solving abilities. She graduated at the top of her class, won the 1951 Law Society of BC's Gold Medal, and was immediately called to the bar. In 1963, Connie married T. Foster Isherwood, and they practised law together in the partnership of Holmes & Isherwood until his retirement in 2006. Foster passed in November 2011, but Connie, being the professional that she was, continued the practice and kept working until the day of her passing. She was acknowledged as being one of the oldest practising lawyers in North America.

Connie volunteered for many organizations, putting in countless hours in the community and beyond. Her community work included being an early member of the Women's Business Network. She was also a long-time supporter of the arts, including the Victoria Symphony and the Asian Arts Society, and she was active in the Canadian Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's) Women's Auxiliary. In addition, Connie was very involved as a member of various Anglican churches through the years, most recently attending Holy Trinity Church, Sooke. Connie served as the appointed chancellor to the bishop of the Diocese of British Columbia, which covers Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, for over 30 years.

Connie was the recipient of multiple awards, including the Canadian 125th Anniversary Medal, in 1992. In 1998, Connie was designated as one of her Majesty's Counsel Learned in Law. The University of Victoria recognized her with a Legacy Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2006, for her work in the community and for her service in its senate. In 2011, Connie and Foster were both honoured with their Sixty-Year Commemorative Practising Certificates from the Law Society of BC – the first couple to receive this distinction in BC. The following year, she became the first recipient of the Victoria Women's Pioneer's Award from the Victoria section of the Canadian Bar Association's Women Lawyers Forum. In 2013, Connie was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. During 2015, Connie was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from UBC, and in 2016 she received Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Law Society of BC and the Allard Alumni Association.

Given her desire to have a family in addition to a career, Connie and Foster adopted 2 boys, Charles and George. Charles was adopted in Vancouver in 1967, and George was adopted in 1969 from the Yukon. The family lived in Oak Bay, where the two boys went to school. She was a wonderful mother from the very beginning to the very end.

Connie was offered the position of being a Judge but respectfully declined, she felt taking care of her family was a priority, as was caring for her extended family members and friends. Over the years, Connie was involved with almost everything she could be, and she always stepped up to be a part of Charles and George's school lives and activities. Always, always giving, never taking and never complaining. She took the good out of the most difficult situations – that is who she was, and she did it with a smile.

In 1996, Connie and Foster moved out to Otter Point, Sooke where they lived in a beautiful home built by Foster. Connie commuted to her office, in one of the two heritage buildings Foster and Connie restored over the years, 5 days a week for 25 years, until the age of 100. It was sometimes an arduous drive, especially in the winter, but Connie was never fazed by it and again never complained.

Eyes of sparkly blue, always twinkling, the spirit of mischief within, Connie was a phenom who knew who she was and what she wanted in her life. She was the most determined but gentle person who provided guidance, clarity, and perspective, through words filled with kindness, positivity and compassion for all. Wherever Connie went, she was the life of the party. She lit up the room, and whether she was at a birthday or Christmas party, at a wedding or on a cruise, everyone wanted to meet her. She will be remembered as a quietly brilliant, dedicated and loving wife, mother, aunt, great-aunt and friend, full of grace, with an affable and benevolent nature, who had a tremendous gift for living life. Meticulous in her work, she was patient, encouraging, and generous with her time, and viewed her law practice as a means to contribute, serve and help others in her community. She will be forever loved and greatly missed by all those who were lucky enough to have known her.

A Memorial Service will be held at St. Mary's Anglican Church, Oak Bay when the Pandemic allows. Interment of ashes will take

place in a private family service at St. Michael and All Angels Church, Royal Oak. Thanks are extended to Dr. James Cox for his kindness and care in her last moments. Flowers gratefully declined. Donations, if desired, can be made to the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation or another charity of your choice. Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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