

Helen Louise Mackay

Helen's Story

The Tapestry of my Life. Helen Louise Mackay – Age 84.

"How Good to Center Down!" Dr. Howard Thurman.

Our beloved Helen passed away peacefully on February 2, 2017 in the Saanich Peninsula Hospice Centre with close family and dear friends close by. While we feel great loss and sadness, we are comforted by the joy and celebration for a full life lived well – 84 years – a life of profound beauty, of much fun and fellowship, full of meaning and great purpose. It's been a blast, Helen might say, with grace and a smile. Now it's time to move on!

Helen is predeceased by her parents, Sam and Nancy Kate Vallis of Colwood, her brother Arthur and her Cousin Donna Robin. She leaves behind daughter Nancy, son Murray (Annaick), husband Stewart and grandchildren Trystin, Riley, Eliyanna and Sheena. Her close family also includes nephews and nieces Ron, John and Blair Vallis and families, Marion Reid, Margaret & Jim Ferguson and family Cousins Dr. Carl Whiteside and family, Dale Whiteside and family, Laurie Sublette and family, Kara Slehofer, Uncle Otto Slehofer, Cousin Josie Downs and family, Aunt Mavis Vallis and family and Cousin Ken Albers & Lisa.

Born in Victoria, Helen grew up around Colwood, Royal Roads (Hatley Castle) and Metchosin. She attended Colwood Elementary, Belmont High and Victoria College, where she graduated as a teacher.

Her first teaching job was at Metchosin Elementary School, followed by a full career of teaching in Vancouver and North Vancouver. Over the years, she has been actively involved in Metropolitan United Church in Victoria – now First Metropolitan United Church and Saint Andrew's Wesley United

Church in Vancouver.

Once back in Victoria, Helen found perhaps her true calling working with Reverend Lawrence Moon building The Open Door at Metropolitan United Church in Victoria (the precursor to Our Place) and serving the street people of the community. Helen came to know very well the life and trials of living on the streets of Victoria. She also came to appreciate its engaging personalities among those she came to know. She also formed lasting friendships and shared much mutual respect with many, particularly the First Nations men and women who shared much of their culture with her.

Helen's life was greatly influenced by Dr. Howard Thurman, a truly inspiring American theologian, scholar and visionary; by Dr. George Clutesi, noted west coast First Nations influence and close family friend Agnes Coley, the major force and demanding personality running the 9/10 soup kitchen at the Catholic Cathedral in Victoria; by Reverend Laura Butler of Metropolitan United Church, great friend and mentor and, who knows, maybe by Jane Louie, close personal friend and fellow mischief maker.

Helen cherished the special memories of driving, with her family, across Canada to visit other family and many friends in New Brunswick, driving to San Francisco to visit and experience the life and vitality of Howard Thurman's Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, leading a group of rambunctious young people on a school trip to Newfoundland, a holiday with her friend Jane driving from Vancouver to Prince Rupert and on to Haida Gwaii by ferry and experiencing the mystical and awe-inspiring charm and grandeur of that special place. She also greatly enjoyed attending Vancouver Canucks hockey games in Vancouver, having season tickets for years from the Canucks very first game played in the National Hockey League. For years Helen and Jane have been fixtures at Victoria Shamrocks lacrosse games.

Above all, there is all the wonderful times Helen enjoyed with her beautiful grandchildren, quietly encouraging, teaching, cheering for them, reading to them, loving them all. Family life was of the utmost importance to Helen.

Helen was also captivated by the sight of eagles flying high and circling overhead. She accepted these sightings as a mark of her fellowship with and her great love and affection and respect for the very many west coast First Nations people that she knew.

Among special thoughts that Helen leaves behind: "The purpose and meaning of life is to grow in spirit and in grace and to share it all with others with feelings of love and fellowship and joy in her heart".

We offer special thanks to the marvelous Saanich Peninsula Hospice and its entire professional and support staff. The care, comfort, compassion and support you offer as the end of life approaches is beyond words. The same goes for all the medical and surgical professionals who have taken care of Helen's health needs over the years.

The Reverend Tammy Lindahl of First Metropolitan United Church has been exceedingly gracious and supportive to our family towards the end of Helen's life. Tammy will conduct Helen's memorial service at First Metropolitan United Church on Quadra and Balmoral Streets in Victoria on Sunday, February 12, 2017 at 2:30 PM.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens

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