

Jo-Ann Wallace

Beloved wife of Stephen Slemon; stepmother to Allie Slemon (Andrea Eadie); grandmother to Arbor Eadie; sister to Nancy Wallace, Catherine Wallace, Laura Howcroft (Ian Howcroft); sister-in-law to Sally Thorne (Mary Adlersberg), Mark Slemon (Jennifer Day), Jane Slemon (Bob Ennenberg); aunt to Tanya, Bradley, Carly, Leah, Michael, Kathleen, Geoffrey, Douglas and Megan.

She was a gardener, bird-watcher, lover of landscapes, and champion of all living things, including her beloved dogs Hamilton, Jessie, Picos, and Bodhi, and the cats she named after movie characters played by the actor Robert DeNiro.

A popular, and enormously celebrated professor of English & Film Studies at the University of Alberta, Jo-Ann chaired her home Department during a time of intellectual reorientation, curriculum overhaul, and graduate program expansion. When the University's Woman Studies program fell under threat of cancellation, she took on the role of Chair, and then worked to transform the program into a full, independent Department. She edited the scholarly journal *English Studies in Canada*, in the process reshaping its look, its content, its professional impact, and its social relevance.

Her scholarship, always feminist in approach, focused on early British modernism, and especially on women whose lives and works did not fit easily into accepted literary critical moulds. With Bridget Elliot she published a monograph on women writers and visual artists at the intersection of their art forms. Her work on the overlooked novelist and polemicist Edith Ellis, one of the founders of the Fellowship of the New Life in the 1880s, made an argument for a different way of writing the history of modernist socialism, feminism, and sexology. Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* accompanied her through most of her professional life, which resulted, among

other achievements, in the publication of a new, scholarly edition of the novel, with Broadview Press, in 2012.

From typing out the entire text of *Mrs Dalloway*, word by word, for the new edition, Jo-Ann learned something about the interplay between literary imagination and memory, and wrote about it in the *London Review of Books*. Like Woolf, she could pelt with laughter – a skill she deployed during the Covid years by trolling the so-called Freedom Convoy protesters on Facebook and on TikTok. She was a master of dry humour, of pointed understatement, of the perfect, capturing phrase.

Jo-Ann threw herself into life, and she crafted hers beautifully. She relished social engagement. She noticed people. She listened deeply, and sought to understand. When asked, she gave wise counsel. She overflowed with ideas, and shared them generously.

One of those ideas resulted in the creation of a memoir-writing group, which included, among others, the late Margaret Ann Armour, Pat Clements, Isobel Grundy, Margaret Mackay, and Jeanne Perreault. From her writing for that group, Jo-Ann produced a book-length memoir, entitled *A Life in Pieces*. It will be published by ThistleDown Press in August, 2024.

We thank her care providers at BC Cancer, and at the Medicine Shoppe on Fort Street in Victoria, for their years of attention to Jo-Ann. We thank the many students who have carried her spirit forward in their own spectacular academic careers. We thank her many fast and enduring friends, to whom she brought her undivided attention, her loyalty, and her genius for nuance.

Her green burial will take place at Royal Oak Burial Park in Victoria, followed by a small, informal gathering of local friends and neighbours at her home.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens

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