

# Joan Ruth Bryant (nee Underhill)

Joan was born in Vancouver, BC and died peacefully in Victoria on August 22, 2021 with her children at her bedside holding her hands and seeing her off to her next big adventure at the age of 100 years and 7 months, the last of her siblings. Predeceased by her husband John Hugh Bryant. Survived by her four children Jim (Gill), Ken, Patricia and Nancy (Guy) and 3 grandchildren, Jack (Elizabeth), great granddaughter Isla, and Ken's children, Noelle and Michael.

Joan was born on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1921 in Vancouver, BC, the second child to Ruth and Jim Underhill, both from pioneering BC families. Mum and her siblings, Ted, Dennis, Shirley, Mark and Deanie had a wonderful childhood on the west coast in a family who loved games and family gatherings. There were a multitude of cousins; her dad was one of 13 children and her mum, one of 6. The Underhill family motto being "Vive et Ama", to live and love.

When she was growing up Mum had a lot of pride in the Underhill family. Her grandfather, Dr. Frederick Underhill, had been the first public health doctor in Vancouver and was instrumental in the fight against the Spanish Flu. Her Dad's company, Underhill and Underhill, surveyed much of the west coast of BC from 1913 and the company still carries on. Her favourite aunt, Anne Underhill had a very distinguished career as an astrophysicist at a time when women didn't do that sort of thing. Mum's brother Ted was also a big influence in her life. Besides being BC's first park naturalist from 1958-82, Ted wrote many books on nature and wine making which he illustrated with his own beautiful photos, drawings and paintings. There were so many other family members that Mum loved to tell us about. We had some big boots to fill!

Many fun summers when mum was a girl were spent at Porteau Cove where they would arrive by boat and they would stay with aunts, uncles, and cousins in a couple of old houses left over from the mining days. Mum could still remember the names of all the local mountains and the name of the caretaker when I showed her a couple of old photos a few years ago... she did have an incredible memory!

When she was still in high school, she received an art scholarship to attend the Vancouver School of Art Saturday Youth Program for several years. She loved that time and had some very famous artists instructing her; B.C. Binning, Fred Amess, F.H Varley to name a few. Mum's love of drawing and painting was passed on to all of us children in one form or another. She was a wonderful artist.



Mum's love of science brought her to study nursing at VGH where she graduated at the top of her class in 1943. She was accepted as a Nursing Sister in 1944 in the RCAMC and served in WW2 at a Canadian military hospital based in an old estate on the outskirts of Basingstoke, England. She was involved in the treatment of soldiers with brain injuries and burns needing plastic surgery. Mum was very proud of her service in WW2 and eventually became Lt. (N/S) J.R. Underhill. She shared many fond memories and stories of this period in her life. She wrote and illustrated a very entertaining account of a trip she took (won in a raffle!) to Paris after liberation with a fellow Nursing Sister. During this waiting period to go home, she was posted for a period of time in a German hospital caring for Canadian soldiers in need there. The things Mum must have seen! She made friends during war times that lasted her entire life and would meet with her old Nursing Sister friends every year for tea.



After the war was over Joan signed onto the permanent force and had several positions in Canada before being sent to Camp Borden in Ontario on an experimental course, a sort of initiation back into civilian life. The men in the camp were very shocked when Mum and some other women came marching in wearing battledress and rifles slung over their shoulders! They were volunteers for one

of the first experimental all female armed units in Canada. Here she met our Dad John Bryant who spotted the cute and pretty Joan marching into camp through his barracks window...as the story goes! A year later they were married in Vancouver. As Mum said, she became an "Easterner" after that, living in Sherbrooke, Quebec where all four of her children were born.



We had a wonderful life in the Eastern Townships with many close family friends and with all of the Bryant family and cousins. Summers at the cottage on Lake Memphremagog, camping trips down to Maine or PEI etc... where Mum's planning skills really came into play... along with her ingenuity to house all of us in a little Shasta trailer and cooking for 6 over a campfire! The "MacGyver" in Mum and Dad was really passed on to us in their ability to

create and to problem solve.

No matter where we were or what we were doing or about to do, Mum was always making lists, drawing diagrams, researching whatever she was curious about, making a beautiful stone retaining wall for the rose bed, sneaking into Dad's workshop to make something, looking up a bird or a bug... she was curious and became knowledgeable about everything she set her mind to. She loved reading the newspaper and nonfiction books of a wide

variety!



During the retirement years in Victoria where we moved in 1975, Mum was a very active member of the “The View Royal Garden Club”. She loved her roses, especially the miniatures, and would participate in all the competitions and of course receive numerous ribbons! There was once an entertaining little film made of Mum and Dad showing their wonderful garden for a local TV channel. She and Dad created quite the garden of flower beds, raised vegetable beds, fruit trees including a gigantic fig tree that Mum loved... and of course all the local raccoons did as well. They had a multitude of inventions and water squirting devices for scaring the wildlife off, mainly to no avail! Mum was a real scientist when it came to growing things and there were endless charts and diagrams for planting. She loved puttering for hours in the garden!

Mum’s painting and crafts flourished when we moved to Victoria. She was a long-time member of “The View Royal Daubers” which was a large group of artistic old and new friends mainly living in their neighborhood. They would meet for painting (or knitting!) and tea every Tuesday afternoon.

She and Dad delivered meals for “Meals on Wheels” for years. They enjoyed meeting all the recipients and loved that they could do this for the community.



All of us children and grandchildren have been greatly inspired by Mum's life and have gone on to have creative and full lives ourselves in our own unique ways, making Mum very proud.

Mum will be greatly missed for her love of family and friends, and her ingenuity, love of science and gardening, her sweet smile and so much more.