

Josephine Irene Seale

Seale, Josephine Irene (nee Gooch), died on December 10, 2006, at the Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria, British Columbia with her two sons, Martin and David, by her side. Josephine was born on June 14, 1927, in Spalding, Lincolnshire, the youngest daughter of Harry and Irene Gooch. A local beauty, known for her lovely singing voice, Josephine left Spalding to be educated at Bedford and then the Guild Hall School of Music and Drama in London. She then embarked on a theatrical and cinematic career that was punctuated by her marriage to a dashing, young doctor, Guy Screech. Guy was enlisted in the SAS, a Special Forces unit of the British Army, and the couple was soon off to Malaya where Guy fought the communist insurgency, and Josephine worked as a clerk for military intelligence. Malaya was also where Josephine appeared in her last movie, "A Town Like Alice," sharing the screen with Peter Finch and Virginia McKenna.

As Josephine frequently reminded Martin in later years, her route to cinematic stardom was cut short by his birth in 1956. By then the family was back in England, and planning to immigrate to Canada. After several years in West Vancouver, and the birth of her second son, David, the family headed back to Malaya. After two more glorious years in the tropics, a brief return to Vancouver, and the end of her first marriage, Josephine settled in Victoria with both of her sons.

Shortly after Josephine's second marriage to Peter Seale, she moved to a magnificent old house at 1926 Crescent Rd in Victoria, and for many years the house became synonymous with Josephine's hospitality, and, in particular, her magnificent Boxing Day parties. After she and Peter parted ways, Josephine went to work at the Emergency Department of the Jubilee Hospital, and she continued there until close to retirement age. In her spare time, she returned to her first love, the theatre, and appeared in numerous productions at the Langham

Court Theatre. She also traveled back to England on an almost annual basis to spend time with family and friends, particularly her beloved friend Maggie.

In the 1970's Josephine met the man who brought her substantial happiness in the latter half of her life. Harry Housser was a charming lawyer whose generosity of spirit and love of a good party, perfectly complemented Josephine's glamour and outgoing personality. Although they were wise enough to maintain separate residences during their 20-year relationship, their bond was strong, and Josephine grieved deeply when Harry died in 1995.

Another challenge faced by Josephine was the loss of a substantial portion of her sight in the early 1990's. Within a very short period of time Josephine went from somebody who could zip around in her Mini Minor (albeit, in a rather hazardous fashion) to somebody who was forced to listen to her books rather than read them. This resulted in a long-standing relationship with the talking books section of the public library (to whom she was grateful to the end), and a change in lifestyle that she absorbed with courage and grace.

In her early days Josephine was an actress by profession; later on it was by inclination. In combination with her natural eccentricity and personal charm, this made her a welcome, if sometimes controversial, addition to any social gathering. She was fond of casually outrageous opinions about affairs of the day delivered with a mock seriousness designed simultaneously to irritate and amuse. She was a strong and unusual personality that people naturally gravitated to. For all of this she was loved by her family and friends, and will be sorely missed.

Josephine is survived by her sons Martin and David Screech, David's wife Jean and their children.