

Madeline “Mel” Bolen

It is with deep sadness and heartache that we regret to announce the passing of Madeline “Mel” Bolen. Mel passed away unexpectedly on December 21st surrounded by her family. Her daughter Samantha and son-in-law Ron, son Timothy, granddaughter Madeline and her partner Benjamin were gifted the opportunity to be with her at the end of her amazing lifetime.

She will be missed so very much by them as well as her seven brothers and sisters, her grandson Calvin, other family members, friends too many to count, booksellers, publishers, sales representatives, the city of Victoria where she made her home and ran her bookstore and she will of course be missed by her customers who were like her other family.

She was a pioneer in early entrepreneurship for women in the seventies and eighties and took chances in expansion of her business in the face of competition. She believed in her community and their support of the independent businesses. She sat on various boards and committees and she saw opportunity where others saw failure. She believed strongly in books and the ideas that they could invoke.

She expanded her store four times in Hillside Mall. Following a divorce in 1977 from Pat Bolen, she moved their bookstore to a larger space and 10 years later when the mall was expanding, she again took a chance and moved once again to a large 5000 square foot space. In 1996, with the large chain looming on the horizon, she made a calculated decision and moved into the current space, transforming it into something that she was very proud of. The community agreed and supported her and Bolen Books was awarded the Libris award twice following this move.

She visited every continent on the earth, her last being

Antarctica where she was enamored by the penguins. Her longtime friend and travelling companion Ernest Marza helped curate her love of art and antiques for over 30 years. This look was carried from her home to the look of her stores. She wanted them to be an extension of herself and her passion because she spent so much time there.

Married and divorced twice, she met her last love John Smith seven years ago. Together, they traveled and had fun and laughed every day. She was so happy she was able to retire and sold the store to her daughter in 2010. She was thrilled to know that her granddaughter Madeline joined the team at the bookstore in 2014 and that her legacy would continue with them both. Sadly, John passed away three years ago and she missed him every day after.

Mel was a private person but she gave so much of herself to the public. Please feel free to come by Bolen Books and share your memories with each other and in a book of condolences.

A Memorial Service will take place in the Sequoia Centre at McCall Gardens, 4665 Falaise Drive, on Saturday, January 28 at 10:00am.

Condolences may also be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens

www.mccallgardens.com