

Margaret Dorene McDonnell (nee Garner)

Margaret Dorene McDonnell (née Garner) passed away in Victoria, British Columbia, after a brief illness, on October 16, 2026, at the age of 95.

Margaret was born on January 17, 1931, in Eston, Saskatchewan, and grew up on the family farm in the Tyner district, north of the South Saskatchewan River. Her father, Charles Garner, homesteaded in the area in 1910 and married Caroline Fry in 1916. Margaret was the youngest of four children, following her sister Maida and brothers Gordon and Laurie.

She attended Gravel Ridge one-room school for Grades 1 through 7 before boarding at St. Joseph's Convent in Rosetown, Saskatchewan, where she completed high school, graduating on June 5, 1949.

Margaret chose nursing as her profession, graduating as a Registered Nurse from the Holy Family School of Nursing in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, on September 11, 1953. After briefly working at the Eston Hospital, she applied for a nursing position in Victoria and was hired at Royal Jubilee Hospital.

In 1954, Margaret made the journey west from Saskatoon to Victoria by air with Trans-Canada Air Lines (TCA), paying \$40 for her ticket. Her large trunk followed by train. The original plane ticket has been preserved by her daughter, Tracey. Margaret's move to the West Coast marked the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

Through her friend Bernie, Margaret met Jack McDonnell, a sailor serving in the Royal Canadian Navy. They were married on May 14, 1955, and began building their life together in Victoria. In 1956, they purchased a piece of property for

\$1,200. Two years later, while Jack was away at sea, Margaret oversaw the construction of their family home, built at a cost of \$13,000.

That home became the centre of family life, where Margaret and Jack raised their four children: Karen, Jeff, Lynn and Tracey. Margaret remained in the home for 65 years, until moving to Berwick Retirement Residence in 2023.

In April 1971, Jack was honourably discharged from the Royal Canadian Navy because of multiple sclerosis. At that time, Margaret resumed working full time as a Registered Nurse at Royal Jubilee Hospital. She ultimately found her calling on the cardiac ward, where she continued caring for patients until her retirement in 1992, at the age of 61. Jack passed away in 1998.

After Jack's passing, Margaret found companionship with Cam Dunphy, whom she met through church. They shared 19 years together, enjoying travel and volunteering side by side. Cam passed away in 2020.

Family was at the heart of Margaret's life. Her four children blessed her with five grandchildren: Brock (Kristina), Michael (Cassie), Aaron (Nicole), Jared (Joy) and Kelsey. She also delighted in her six great-grandchildren: Maddie, Luke, Leo, Abigail, Theo and Lucas, with another great-granddaughter expected at the end of November.

Margaret's Christian faith was an important part of her life. She was part of both St. Patrick's and Holy Cross parishes in Victoria. After retiring from nursing, she continued serving others through volunteer work with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Margaret had a generous spirit and a lifelong commitment to helping others. She volunteered with the Sail and Life Training Society (SALTS) and the Heart and Stroke Foundation. She also spent more than 20 years volunteering with Sendial, a

Thrifty Foods service that helped seniors by having volunteers fill their grocery orders over the phone. In addition, she volunteered in the gift shop at Royal Jubilee Hospital, returning to the hospital community where she had spent so much of her professional life.

Margaret loved to travel, with Italy among her favourite destinations. Most meaningful to her, however, were her visits to Medjugorje, a place of special significance because of her deep Christian faith. Her travels also took her to Hawaii, the British Isles, Europe, Turkey, Egypt and Israel.

A great tennis fan, Margaret had the memorable experience of attending Wimbledon twice with her cousin Muriel, who lived in London. At home, she took great pleasure in tending her roses and vegetable gardens. For many years, her walking group kept her active, outdoors and connected with friends.

Some of the family's most cherished memories are of time spent with Grandma helping in her vegetable garden, picking apples and enjoying trips to the beach. Her homemade apple pies and shortbread, made using her mother's recipe, were family favourites, as were her special occasion turkey dinners with all the trimmings. These simple traditions brought the family together and created memories that will be treasured across generations.

Margaret's life spanned nearly a century, taking her from the Saskatchewan prairie to a long and fulfilling life on Vancouver Island. She built a career caring for others, a home filled with family, and a life enriched by faith, travel, gardening, friendship and service to her community.

She will be lovingly remembered by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who will carry her memory forward through the generations.

Margaret's family is grateful for the many years they shared with her and for the lasting legacy of love, faith, dedication

and family she leaves behind.

A Funeral Mass will be held at Holy Cross Catholic Church, 4049 Gordon Head Road, Victoria BC on Thursday, November 12, 2026, at 11:00am.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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